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ONTOLOGICAL MOVEMENT IN THEATER: AN ACCOUNT OF THE
PREPARATION AND DIRECTION OF THE PLAY *DYLAN* BY SIDNEY MICHAELS

by

Aaron Sawyer

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
the Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Theatre Arts

Under the Supervision of Professor Virginia Smith

Lincoln, Nebraska

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ONTOLOGICAL MOVEMENT IN THEATER: AN ACCOUNT OF THE
PREPARATION AND DIRECTION OF THE PLAY *DYLAN* BY SIDNEY
MICHAELS.

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University of Nebraska, 2011

Advisor: Virginia Smith

This document contains a graduate thesis and follows the creative process behind Aaron Sawyer's direction of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's 2011 theatrical production of the play *Dylan* by Sidney Michaels. It contains seven sections depicting thesis production from the selection of the material to its completion and final reviews. The introduction establishes the perspectives and experiences that led me to this thesis. The pre-production section is comprised of an analysis of the script as well as research on the time-periods material to the play and its production. The director's concept portion analyzes the dramatic structures contained within the play, and my aesthetic approach to design and performance styles. The production section consists of journal entries tracking the design and performance progress of the production. The post-production segment reviews the resulting performance from the perspective of faculty responders as well as my own. The conclusion section discusses the production's journey in the context of both ideals and pragmatics.

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Introduction

Both in life and in plays, a person or character's prior experiences have uniquely shaped their purpose and perspective on upcoming events. As Stanislavski wrote, to understand a person or character, we must "create one whole unbroken line that flows from the past, through the present, into the future..." (Stanislavski) Among the more significant of my life experiences was the achievement of a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2002 from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois with a major in Theatre Direction, a minor in Philosophy, and a goodly emphasis in Business. My undergraduate program drew applicants from both the East and West coasts, and my fellow students shared a sense of competitive curiosity that was both punishing and pleasurable. In addition to the faculty-guided productions, the student body had "Pipedreams", a laboratory theatre outlet of four short performances a week. We were given free reign of the building at nearly all hours and the expectation to reinvent ourselves each semester. Our fate was in our hands. The university required of us tenacity, creativity, and courage; when we displayed those qualities the university rewarded us. The program kept a high bar by capitalizing on the strengths of each student and shoring up weaknesses. We knew our strengths, not our versatility, would get us work so long as our weaknesses did not impede us too greatly. Many of my classmates have found a broad range of successes in Broadway and Hollywood, while others enjoy a powerful presence on the Chicago stage. While many are professionals with inspiring careers, some highlights of those students most intimately connected with my time at the university include actress Sierra Boggess, the leading role

in the Broadway Premiere of *The Little Mermaid*; actor Tad Hilgenbrink, leading role in the latter part of the *American Pie* movie series, and director Ben Fuschen, Artistic Director of *Oracle* theatre in Chicago.

Immediately after college, I worked as an actor and director in Nebraska, Kansas, and Mississippi before marrying and moving to Los Angeles to begin a career in the film industry. Hollywood provided me with on-set work in twelve (and occasionally twenty-four) hour shifts, often absent wages. Frustrated to be working on projects I considered unworthy of an audience, let alone uncompensated hours from me, I sought refuge in the dignified self-loathing of agency life at the Paradigm Agency, a top tier Beverly Hills talent and literary agency where I learned the importance of information and appearances. The elusive ability to create actual films in Hollywood was a trait retained only by the ultra-competitive, intelligent, talented, and wealthy Los Angeles populace who all possessed an extreme sense of passion, confidence, and the inability to hear the word “no”. While working at Paradigm, I wrote and directed a well-respected short film entitled, “Broken Circle” which starred Emmy winner Michael Badalucco. I was unprepared for the opportunities suddenly within my reach and felt lost and desperate to grow beyond the limits of my intuition. I worked ceaselessly to study film history, dramatic structure, and write the perfect screenplay before my bout with Crohn’s Disease, an autoimmune disorder of the digestive track, forced me to alter my life course. After swallowing abuse, impulse, fear, and ambition, my gut finally brought into reality the colloquial expressions it had endured on my behalf. By the time the doctor’s medicine began to take effect, I’d lost my job but gained a better understanding of my own

mortality. I decided to allow myself some time to heal and mature in a supportive educational environment while pursuing a graduate degree.

During my Los Angeles experiences I was privileged to work with and around some of the most highly successful professionals in the entertainment industry: Stephen Rose, a top television literary agent at the Paradigm Talent Agency who possessed a masterful ability to pitch his clients as well as Jasan Pagni and Patti Lofton, two ambitious, rising young, below-the-line agents of very different but effective business tactics; Michael Menchel, a rags to riches representative turned film producer full of tales of his misadventures with Hollywood stars the likes of Oliver Stone and Robin Williams; and Henry Jaglom, an infamously cantankerous independent film director and darling of the festival circuit. By surrounding myself with these people and others I began to notice commonalities in their attitudes toward the entertainment industry: amongst the multitude of craftsmen a unique voice was an artist's greatest asset; the means often justify the end in such a high risk-reward environment; justice, hardships, and feelings mattered little, if at all; and that no matter what happened on the path to a success, you would be asked to create again, but a pleasant failure was a present death. This is the standard to which I have learned to hold myself and others. Those who have met the standard remain grateful and loyal comrades in artistic creation.

I have learned, in contrast, through the pursuit of this degree that within the artificially closed environment of a university, the primary focus has been placed, not on wringing out creation from available resources, but instead on the preservation of resources from the expense of creation. Academia has competed for a limited supply of

students pursuing a process within the classroom. The professional world has been in contradistinction flooded with a supply of unending actors, writers, directors, and technicians hungry for success and has as its primary goal the creation of a superior end product. The methods, values, and purposes of these two worlds collided as academia moved the process of its classrooms to create a product upon the stage.

Ontology is a branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.

(Dictionary.com) Often in this document I will divide a character's reality into realms wherein two competing sets of truths seem to exist at the same time: Dylan's poetic world of ideas and ideals versus his deteriorating physical reality of poverty, disease, and family strife. I have directed the production to specifically accent those times when the focus will shift and a new truth will appear to be dominant over another such as an instance where Dylan Thomas, lifting himself and his listeners in a world of poetic ecstasy driven by words and ideas being suddenly being dragged back to the physical realm by a debilitating cough.

Shifts in the educational world from a process-orientated to a product-oriented system can represent a similar journey as a metaphorical coughing fit of a troubled production can pull us away from the realm of idea-as-end thinking nurtured in the classroom to the professional world of idea-as-means wherein the sickly production represents an objective end. While such shifts do not represent dual realities, they do represent dual value systems and can be spoken about in terms of (rather than ontology) axiology: the study of the nature of values and value judgments. (Dictionary.com) In order to evaluate the actions that took place over the course of the production, one must

operate from within one of these axiological perspectives: process-oriented or product-oriented. It is hardly a given that a happy process will result in an effective product. As 2008 Tony Award Winning Director Bartle Sherr states, “I don’t trust a happy process. I think it’s a passionate, difficult, incredibly demanding, intense business.” (Sherr) While shifts in ontological focus are a central component of my design and performance concept for Sidney Michael’s *Dylan*, the constant axiological dilemma created by striving for an end product in process-focused environment created my most divisive moments.

This thesis documents the discoveries made during the collaborative, creative, and artistic endeavor that comprised the production. I will describe the process from its initial proposal, casting, rehearsals and production meetings, and reactions to its final curtain. While learning experiences are sometimes those events of wreckage and disaster from which one pulls themselves, they can also be the near misses, correct assumptions, and surprise successes. The biggest lesson I can glean from this thesis production is a confirmation in the value of the attitudes and principles I have learned to apply from my career in the professional world and as a graduate student.

I. Research Narrative Area I: Pre-Production

In this section I have accounted for the research, concepts, aesthetic and design choices leading up to the auditions for the production. I analyzed and contextualized the interplay between the multiple worlds, time periods, and characters concerning both the original and this forthcoming production.

A. Discussion of Play Selection

The play *Dylan* by Sidney Michaels was chosen by Paul Steger, the Director of the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film as the central subject matter for this thesis for production from a selection of my proposals. This production was a requirement for the Masters of Fine Arts degree by the Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the 2010-2011 academic year. Virginia Smith, the Associate Professor of Directing had also made the incorporation of multimedia into the play, effectively projections, a requirement as a part of the thesis production. With my greatest accomplishment upon entering the department being in realistic cinema, I was excited to explore Brechtian and other non-realistic styles of theatre. The projection requirement further reinforced an arresting and self-aware theatrical environment of mixed media. Instead, the theatre department consistently steered me away from this interest and, of those productions proposed, their selection of *Dylan* represented the most realistic performance style.

The text of Sidney Michaels' *Dylan* has presented a variety of performance challenges for both performance and design students. In the proposal for this production, I wrote: "*Dylan* offers an amazing cathartic journey in utilizing realistic acting with a variety of ages, accents, moments of heightened poetic text, and character backgrounds on a grand scale, challenging the undergraduate actors vocally, physically, and emotionally. It furthermore presents a wide range in terms of atmosphere, intimacy, and magic." *Dylan* contained two strong female leads, and aligned with other common traits contained in many of the scripts selected for production at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln: historical characters, formal period costumes, poetic language, and dialect. I believe the compelling dramatic arc of a historical character, the realistic style, and the department's vision on how to approach the technical challenges resulted in the university's selection of this particular text.

My advocacy of this dramatic work centered on my connection to the play's central theme: the artist in a world of craftsmen. In a review of the Broadway Premiere, The Post-Standard stated, "Michaels has done more than write about a poet's inner struggle with himself, he has laid bare aspects of the vacuity and wanton immorality of those segments of society that helped to destroy Dylan Thomas." (Bowden) Dylan Thomas, the central character, possessed a vision of universal and beautiful truths about humanity that, when applied to the conformities of reality, clash tragically with the accepted falsehoods comprising basic human interaction. The script provided fast-paced, witty dialogue bouncing between lines of poetic depth. Sidney Michaels' text was filled

with beautiful imagery and musicality that culminated in a structurally cohesive metaphor, producing an emotional and contemplative gravity within the audience.

Depending on the moral point-of-view of the audience member, Michael's work functions in two different modes. In so much as Michael's work was a Problem Play, Dylan's over-pursuit of beauty was expected to both inspire and disgust the audience with a fascination not unlike a slow-motion car crashing into a wall. We have enjoyed judging Dylan for his recklessness. We feel superior to his flawed character, and yet we root for the wall to crumble. David Mamet stated, "The problem play is a melodrama cleansed of invention. Its stated question...allows the viewer to indulge in a fantasy of power. The Problem Play offers indignation. We indulge in a desire to feel superior to events, to history, in short, to the natural order. In the problem play...the eventual triumph is assigned a courtesy position as 'in doubt' to allow us, again, to savor-and overcome-anxiety." (Mamet, *Three Uses of the Knife: On the Nature and Purpose of Drama* 15)

Michael's text presented a famously tragic character to an audience who smugly knew the correct choice of the options presented by the author. "The play emphasizes, as the peripheral boundary of his Olympian fire, that quality in Dylan's nature that made him a profligate spendthrift, that compelled him to find escape in amorous adventures, alcohol and uninhibited speech." (Bowden) In watching the demise of Dylan Thomas, we have had the chance to confirm our belief in moderation, and yet we were, in part, responsible for his downfall. We were his enablers, cheering him onward and envious of the delight brought by his excess.

In so much as Michael's work was a Tragedy, we feel a connection to Dylan Thomas' struggles against ambition and oppression. We have projected ourselves into the spiraling Dylan, championing his tragic failure to remain youthful, truthful, and human under the demands of society. David Mamet stated, "Tragedy celebrates the individual's subjugation and thus his or her release from the burden of repression and its attendant anxiety... [Tragedy] free[s] us from the burden of [powerlessness'] oppression." (Mamet, *Three Uses of the Knife: On the Nature and Purpose of Drama* 16) Thus, an audience member who felt themselves to have been a member of society and a representative of its norms will connect to this work as a Problem Play while an audience member who feels subjugated by of society and its rules will connect more to *Dylan* as a tragedy. Most audience members will experience these relationships to Michael's text in some combination.

B. Contextual Research:

1. Playwright

Born in 1927 and still living at the time of this thesis, Sidney Michaels' has had five plays receive Broadway productions. Michaels garnered three consecutive nominations between 1963 and 1965 for Best Play and Best Author for *Tchin-Tchin*, *Ben Franklin in Paris*, and *Dylan* (ibdb.com). Born in New York City, Michaels also wrote *Carousel*, a Made-For-TV Movie in 1967 based on the classic musical and a second Made-For-TV Movie in 1980 entitled *Cry of the Innocent* for NBC. Michaels also wrote two feature films: *Key Witness*, starring Jeffrey Hunter and Pat Crowley with Dennis

Hopper which was “an action-filled story [that] centers on a man threatened by a gang of hoodlums after he is witness to a murder” (Danzig) ; and *The Night They Raided Minsky's* in 1968, a raunchy, bawdy comedy starring vaudevillian Bert Lahr in his final role. Michaels’ father worked for more than 50 years as a “stage manager at Boston's Old Howard, one of the world's most famous burlesque houses” and raised his son in the theatre, spanking him when he would go backstage as a youngster. (Calogero) Michaels described the support from his family to continue in the entertainment business: “A Gypsy fortune teller, while I was en route by stork, informed my southern belle mother I would be the very reincarnation of one Mr. W. Shakespeare. Thus, the idea was drummed into me from the moment I first sat up in my crib.” (Michaels, Sidney Michaels: A Wild Week Changed His Career 30) Michaels’ work showed commercial versatility, and he wrote television Westerns, bawdy comedies, and dramas for the Hollywood system after demonstrating his success on Broadway.

a) Plays by the Playwright

Time Magazine wrote of Sidney Michaels’ 1960 play: “*Tchin-Tchin* is magical. It is also fragile, but it is saved from wispieness by [Margaret] Leighton and [Anthony] Quinn. Excellence is an acting habit with Margaret Leighton, and her Pamela is expectably perfect. Anthony Quinn brings his subtlest gifts to Caesario, a character in whom anguish and sentiment sprout like city flowers between slabs of concrete.” (Waifs) *Tchin-Tchin* was Michaels’ first Broadway play, the title of which means “hello and goodbye” in Chinese according to the play. (Michaels, *Tchin-Tchin*) *Tchin-Tchin* began much in the same manner as Michaels’ *Dylan*. A lengthy conversation ensued between

two future lovers who must come to a joint resolution about a situation affecting both finances and heartache. The dialogue in both was remarkable in its range between witty flirtation and cutting conversation. Themes of childish drunkenness and unrequited love also figured strongly in Michaels' dialogue. Strong poetic declarations occurred frequently as well. As I perceived in Michael's other major works (*Goodtime Charley*, *Ben Franklin in America*, and *Tricks of the Trade*) dialogue was Michaels' primary tool to manipulate the audience into caring for the central characters. His down-and-out characters were aware of the detrimental choices they continue to make, yet they often carried a sense of moral pride over the upright, but morally/spiritually bankrupt citizens of society. In his writing, Michaels' often used an *Everyman* character that appealed to a higher morality by being willfully flawed and rebellious towards the absurdity of social norms. Similar to *Dylan*, the central crimes of the main characters were that of living life too voraciously, too honestly, and with too much joy.

b) Playwright's Major Objectives

It is impossible truly to know the intentions of a playwright. Even with evidence such as interviews, the playwright's expressed intentions remain unreliable and irrelevant to the finished work as a director must interpret the audience's relationship to the text *ex post facto*. A clear case in support of this point may involve a case where a playwright may intend a certain reaction from the audience such as laughter in a moment that plays upon society's shared fear or disdain for an outsider's lifestyle. In the context of his recent celebrity, Sidney Michaels' may have desired to smear the poet Dylan Thomas with an overly provocative dramatization of an immoral life. He may have wished to

idolize his wild behavior and present a hedonistic lesson of *carpe diem* to an overly-stuffy audience. Interviews on this subject present only those thoughts the playwright wished to make public, and those thoughts would certainly have been calculated to consider their desired commercial or political effect.

To penetrate the mind of the playwright is an impossible and irrelevant exercise, yet some facts can be revealed about the differences between the texts. By analyzing the events that take place within the playwright's dramatization and comparing it to texts attempting a neutral bias, it is possible to converse over the differences, additions, and omissions. However, it would be a mistake to posit the intention of the artist whose hand may be motivated by a multitude of considerations including tempo, length, and structure. Such results should never be allowed to affect directorial decisions in the name of loyalty or correctness to any person or supposed fact. It is the duty of any dramatist to carve out the ideal dramatic arc in tune with the zeitgeist of its intended audience to achieve the maximum impact of the work.

The class, concerns, information, and expectations of Michael's original audience differ greatly from this production. Sidney Michaels based the bulk of his play on the, then, controversial biography of Dylan Thomas titled *Dylan Thomas in America: An Intimate Journal* by John Malcolm Brinnin. Brinnin's biography contains a foreword by Caitlin Thomas stating, "I am not quarreling with Brinnin's presentation of Dylan. It is impossible to hit back at a man who does not know that he is hitting you, and who is far too cautious of the laws of libel to say plainly what can only be read between the lines . . .

I feel that I should (that it is an Augean duty, pushed on me against my will) do my best, with a still hot shovel of overloaded feeling and a lot of windily winding words, to vindicate first Dylan, then me, then both of us together.” (Thomas) Given the attention Michaels’ spends on the exploits of Thomas, the author’s attraction to the subject matter may have less to do with his reverence for the poetry of Dylan Thomas and more to do with the poet’s wild antics. However, New York audiences had seen Dylan Thomas read his poetic works; they had not seen an intimate portrayal of his scandalous personal life brought to stage. Michaels stated, “I had spent my several years in Hollywood trying to get the studios to let me do precisely what she [Caitlin] was proposing — a play about the American trips of Dylan Thomas, his passionate clash of arms with his wife and his bizarre self-destruction.” (Michaels, Sidney Michaels: A Wild Week Changed His Career 30) In a world transfixed with artists making daily embarrassing blunders and being publicly burnt in the flame of celebrity to the benefit and demise of their careers, would a modern audience find Dylan Thomas to be a “bizarre” exception or a tame commonality?

Dylan was Michaels’ first major work, completed only after his publishers sat him down and accused him of telling people he was a great writer who had yet to write a great play. “I was the boy who cried genius!” Michaels stated. (Michaels, Sidney Michaels: A Wild Week Changed His Career) As Michaels developed the play, “I would read the play every night to audiences of 50 people — that’s how I do rewrites, testing it by performing it.” (Gastonia Gazette 30) As connected as Michaels was to the reactions of the audience during the creation of *Dylan*, one must remember focus that was paid to it and take care to re-craft this thread for the modern world.

c) **Date of Composition and Setting in History**

Sidney Michael set his play in Wales and America during the early 1950's. World War II had ended less than a decade earlier, and televisions were not yet commonplace in the homes of most Americans. President Eisenhower took office in 1953, running on a crusade against Communism, Korea and corruption. (Dickey) To the people of 1953, man-made satellites had yet to orbit the earth, and outer space remained a romanticized object an untouchable distance away.

Between the period of the play's 1950's setting and its 1964 premiere, some significant events changed mankind's understanding of their relationship to the universe. The space race began in 1957, and satellites started orbiting the earth. The economy had grown since the 1950s and the percentage of high school graduates increased from the mid 30s to over 40 per cent. (Harper College) While the "dynamic conservatism" of President Dwight D. Eisenhower had characterized the early 1950's, America had grown more progressive and liberal under President Kennedy. (Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site) In November of 1963, the country suffered the assassination of President John F. Kennedy was about to reelect his successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson, defeating "Mr. Conservative" Barry Goldwater in the sixth most lopsided elections in United States history. The country was in a state of peace until August of 1963, when United States Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, launching the Viet Nam War. (Moise) The first major production of *Dylan* occurred on Broadway on January 18th, 1964. (ibdb.com)

At the time of the 1964 *Dylan* premiere, the spirited era of counter-culture and social revolution in the 1960s was just beginning. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech had taken place in August of in 1963, and after the election of President John F. Kennedy in November of 1960 the nation wrestled with questions about the narrow victory of its first Irish and Catholic leader. Progressive values dominated the landscape as President Kennedy created the Peace Corps, saying in his 1961 inaugural address "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country". (Lillian Goldman Law Library)

d) Values Contained Within The Play

Concerning the social, political, cultural, economic, and spiritual values contained within the play, the character of Dylan Thomas represented a liberating force for which the nation was primed. The play's attitude towards social change mirrored the progression of the United States between the 1950s and 1960s. The sexual escapades of Dylan and Caitlin, for example, were a great source of both joy and pain in the play. Dylan clearly felt a connection between sexual release and his connection to the universe, but unlike Caitlin, his transgressions seemed to feed his sense of self rather than pay tribute to another. As the center of his own spiritual universe, Dylan is in line with the self-centered, irreverent spiritual attitudes often associated with the 1960's. Michael's Dylan compares himself to Christ (Michaels, *Dylan a Play* By Sidney Michaels 13) in the very first scene, and later mocks a minister when confronted near the end of Act One (Michaels, *Dylan a Play* By Sidney Michaels 45). In a self-destructive turn, Dylan mocks Jay Henry claiming to be "anti-Stalinist" in one breath, but later clarifying: "I mean I'm

in favor of the worker as opposed to the exploiting bosses. I'm in favor of feeding the hungry, curing the ill, destroying all armaments everywhere, and tearing down borders between people". (Michaels, *Dylan a Play* By Sidney Michaels 74) Economics play a major role in the play, as the need for financial resources motivates Dylan's trip to America. Throughout the play, Dylan bemoans his inability to save money: "I don't know how. It just seemed to go. Every night. All those people. I haven't a nickel left. Cat'll kill me" (Michaels, *Dylan a Play* By Sidney Michaels 47) Michael's play is also progressive on the subject of race, pricking the ears of both the audience and Jay Henry when Dylan asks "And do you know any nice Negro girl I can marry off my son to?" (Michaels, *Dylan a Play* By Sidney Michaels 74) *Dylan Thomas* is a well-timed vehicle for Michaels to touch the coming zeitgeist and express the liberal attitudes soon to be embraced within the coming decade. For a modern audience, Sidney Michael's play allows us to peer back at the tragic effects our mistaken society had upon such a visionary character.

e) Date and Location of the Play's Premiere Performance

Dylan was a Broadway success. According to the Internet Broadway Database, the play first premiered at the Plymouth Theatre in New York City on January 18th, 1964 and performed 273 times, closing on September 12th of the same year. The opening night cast included Sir Alec Guinness as Dylan Thomas, Kate Reid as Caitlin Thomas, Barbara Berjer as Meg Stuart, and James Ray as John Malcolm Brinnin.

While the play had a moderately short run, it garnered 1964 Tony Award nominations for Best Play, Best Featured Actress (Kate Reid), and Best Producer

(Dramatic) for George W. George and Frank Granat while winning the Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play for Sir Alec Guinness. Peter Glenville directed the Broadway production. Oliver Smith implemented a rotating Scenic Design utilizing a large turntable; Ruth Morley designed costumes; and Lighting Design was by Jack Brown.

f) Critical bias to the play's premiere

One must take historical influences and theatrical bias into account when considering the critical reaction to the play's Broadway premiere. In his book, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*, Jonas Barish states, "The mythic poet, then, instead of being credited with originality, and relieved of the onus of being a copier, is dismissed as a fabricator of falsehoods and reduced to a still lower rank in the mimetic hierarchy." (Barish) By many reviewers, Sidney Michaels, the mythic poet, is de-legitimized as a creator of a dramatic work and relegated to the level of an unskilled copycat and liar, unable or unwilling to accurately account real world the events. Clamors for more original source material come from this anti-theatrical attitude, complaining that Sidney Michaels "used only six lines of dialogue that were actually spoken by Dylan Thomas. The lines in question were extracted them from an interview the poet gave at Idlewild Airport on his first visit to America." (Kilgallen 12) Historical references tempt critics of drama to uniquely apply this academic standard required of a historical document that amounts to a Catch-22 for dramatic work: either the work is boring and adhered to firmly to reality, or it is too sensational and has compressed the character's truth too far. Both criticism insert a new standard to the work, and do not address the work as a self-contained imagining.

The critical response to *Dylan* faces a similar journey to the central character as two ontological realms compete: the world of the author and the flesh and blood world of the poet. The New York Times review of the premiere performance described the play's scenes as being both "sharp and penetrating" and "colorful and amusing." (Taubman) However, the same article struggles to praise the play when comparing it to the flesh and blood man: "The play itself does not measure up to the dramatic possibilities in Dylan Thomas's furious, tormented existence." (Taubman) Reviews of *Dylan* remained conflicted whenever comparisons were made to the flesh-and-blood Dylan Thomas, but praise abounds when the discussion moves toward the play's performance. Among the most enthusiastic was one published in the *New York Post*: "A sensitive, sympathetic and compelling depiction" (qtd. in (Broadway Boxscore 12). More qualified viewpoints appeared likewise in the *New York Herald-Tribune*: "The play reports without arriving at gradually deeper soundings" (qtd. in "Broadway Boxscore 12). In matters concerning the critical responses to *Dylan*, readers must take care to understand to what standard the critic was applying to a theatrical work.

g) Critical response to the structure of *Dylan*

Perhaps the most commonly cited element about the play's structure was its "multitude of rapidly moving scenes." (Bowden) Reviews generally praised director Peter Glenville for meeting his challenge well. *The New York Times* review described the scenes as shifting "sensitively from the intense, personal scenes to the public, festive ones" (Taubman). The Post-Standard also complimented scenic designer Oliver Smith's rotating design as an "imaginative use of a revolving turret staircase" (Bowden), while

the *New York Times* critic found the scenic design to be an “unsatisfactory compromise between illusion and realism.” (Taubman) In the middle of its Broadway run, Columbia pictures acquired the screen rights to *Dylan*. Although Columbia “reported that a major production and cast package [was] in the process of being assembled for the motion picture,” the motion picture was never completed (Oakland Tribune).

h) A summation of the play’s performance history

After its Broadway run had completed, a number of other productions took place around the country. In her autobiography “My First Five Husbands ... and the Ones Who Got Away” (2007), Rue McClanahan, most famously known for her role as Blanche on the television series *The Golden Girls*, reported in her autobiography that she received a compliment from Tennessee Williams for her portrayal of Caitlin Thomas at the Mercer O’Casey Theatre in New York City in 1972. (Filmreference.com) By the early 1970’s *Dylan* had appeared around the country in several community theatre productions. (Boise Little Theater). Significant recent performances of the script also includes a Joseph Jefferson Award Winning production by the Seanachai Theatre Company in Chicago in 2002 starring John Sierros as Dylan (Seanachai Theatre Company).

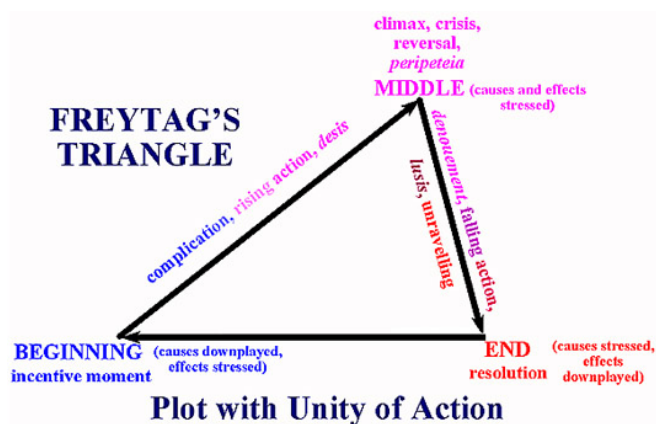
2. Script analysis of *Dylan*

a) Tragic Structure of *Dylan*

An Aristotelian analysis of the Sidney Michaels’ *Dylan* reveals a great deal about the playwright’s intentions to mold Dylan into the classic form of the tragic hero. Dylan Thomas actually went on speaking tours in America three times (1950, ’52, ’53), but

Michael's compressed it into two tours. Not only does this compression provide a cleaner dramatic line, but it provides the audience with a direct compare/contrast, seeing Dylan in America on his own and with Caitlin, enabling us to see that Dylan's struggles are not cured by his wife. Michaels also compresses multiple women into the character of Meg, providing a cleaner romantic stand-off, but also presenting a more palatable Dylan for the audience. Michaels' Dylan is a tragic romantic, married to the wrong woman in comparison to the real-life Dylan who was far less monogamous (with his attentions if not with his body). By making those two compressions, Sidney Michaels moved Dylan Thomas closer to a consistent and tragic character raging against the dying of his own light and farther from a womanizing alcoholic absent any dignity beyond the present moment.

An Aristotelian analysis of the plot of Sidney Michaels' *Dylan* supports the academic classification of the text as a classic tragedy. Aristotle places plot as the most important feature, or "first principle" of tragedy. (McManus, Barbara F. "Outline of Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy in the POETICS"). The selection and arrangement of the incidents within the text, though not always aligned with real-world accounts, the playwright artfully arranged the plot to resemble the shape of German critic Gustav Freytag's Triangle: (McManus)



b) Selection of the Broadway Ending

The text of *Dylan* includes two endings: the one Michaels originally wrote and another one he conceived later for the Broadway production. The Broadway ending will appear in this production. In addition to fewer production problems for scenic and property designers, the Broadway ending provides a cleaner Aristotelian tragic arc and analysis, as it continues in the proper direction of the play's ontological movement, meaning a shift in focus from the physical-embodied to the mental-spiritual-ideal. The term ontological typically refers to the branch of metaphysics that studies the nature of existence or being as such. (Dictionary.com) In this sense, ontological is used to refer to the "concepts and relationships that can exist for an agent or a community of agents." (Gruber) In this production, the character of Dylan is conceived of as having a powerful connection to two opposing realms of truth: the physical and biological world of pads of paper, hacking coughs and alcohol poisoning; and the mental-spiritual-ideal world of god, love, and other poetic ideals. The Broadway ending of Michaels' text moves the audience toward the more hopeful realm of ideals, rather than the sudden and strong return to the realities of Dylan's failures to deal with the physical world.

c) Character analyses for each major character

(1) Dylan Thomas

Aristotle writes that characters in a tragedy should be written in the following manner: goodness, realistic to their character-type, realistic, consistent within themselves, logical, idealized. (Stevenson, Daniel C. "Poetics by Aristotle") With Aristotle's thoughts

in mind, it would benefit the production if the character of Dylan is focused toward the pursuit of an idealized concept of a goodness not present on earth, rather than toward a flawed physical addiction to alcohol or fame. As this production's good and idealized Dylan chases a higher realm, his erratic actions should appear to flow from a logical core.

Dylan is a Dionysius-like character, fated to burn with the essence of life and eventually succumb to its flame. Dylan even sounds like Dion (a variant of Dionysius). Dylan and Dionysius share many attributes: liberators of souls through the freedom from self by madness, ecstasy, or wine. The Dionysian symbols of the bull, serpent, and ivy can be paired with Welsh equivalents in Dylan's White Horse Tavern, Sexual Exploits, and Welsh Greenery. One can also compare the cult following that worshiped Dylan to that of Dionysius. Unfortunately, Dylan is not a god and cannot contain his intense connection to divine power. Dylan's sense of unworthiness as a "near Dionysius" results in his fall as a tragic character.

Dylan's master objective is to find peace within himself. I believe Dylan's inability to find peace stems from his tendency to participate in a life force greater than normal men. Dylan's experience with a deeper (or higher) reality, which Plato termed the *noumenon*, causes him great distress and depression because he at times is trapped in the normal realm of human existence which Plato termed the *phenomenon*. When Dylan finds himself in an intolerable boredom, unconnected to this life force, he finds himself in a position similar to a drug addict's after experiencing chemical highs. Also like a drug addict, Dylan moves from addiction to addiction in an attempt to fill the void. His heavy

turn toward alcohol, cigarettes, women, and fame while in America, however, was uncharacteristic. In Wales, Dylan had found a half-peace, boxed in by financial restraints, a smaller known community of neighbors, and the ability to only receive respect for his artistic work. The problem of America, for Dylan, was the title of greatness. In Wales, Dylan had touched the Dionysian life-source, wrote it down, and felt privileged to have done so. In America, on the other hand, he grew painfully aware of his inability to tap this resource at will. He became overwhelmed with inescapable self-loathing. He felt like a fraud or has-been. Though he may have once touched greatness, he was now a penniless loser, and his desire to prove otherwise, both to himself and to America, was immense. He did not understand America and rather than critique it, he attempted to adapt his every action to its ways. In a foreword to John Malcolm Brinnin's biography of Dylan, *Dylan Thomas In America*, Caitlin writes on the differences between Dylan in America and in Wales saying, "There is no such thing as the one true Dylan Thomas, nor anybody else; but, necessarily, even less so with a kaleidoscopic-faced poet. He is conditioned by the rehearsing need to withhold from the light his private performance till it is ready for showing." (Brinnin) Caitlin goes on to state her opinion that Brinnin's account of Dylan, from which this play largely draws, is a "falsely publicized life version" of Dylan's story. A director of Sidney Michaels' production might benefit from understanding the two stories of Dylan, but in the playwright did not portray the more mild-mannered and softly grounded Welshman described by Caitlin. He is instead the famous, ripping drunk and tormented playboy of John Malcolm Brinnin.

In the performance of Dylan Thomas, the actor must be capable of carrying an intimately truthful portrayal while being a vibrant drunk putting on theatrical antics. The script calls for a “cut-glass British” accent. In John Malcolm Brinnin’s biography of Dylan, a number of stories report on his hacking cough and tendency to wake suddenly after passing out, ready for a drink. When in the United States, Dylan drank beer for meals and switched to whiskey to get drunk: a habit introduced to him in America. He changed from cigarettes to cigars and bought new clothing to dress like the natives. Dylan responds to all things American: women, style, wealth, drunkenness, fame, and abandonment. His self-worth comes from his poetry, from which he feels more and more disconnected, even as readers and critics heaped more and more praise upon it. He feels that his best talent is behind him, resulting in self-loathing. The common misconception of a “tragic flaw” in the character of Dylan is incorrect, but if one were to attempt to apply such a label to Sidney Michaels’ character, Dylan errs in living too much, in over-consuming life. Dylan’s flaw in the somewhat classic sense is his ignorance or mistaken notion that he might acquire happiness from some outward source: wealth, fame, alcohol, or women, and finally a return to his artistic form. Michael’s character reaches for a reality greater than our own. Dylan attempts to bring his Dionysius sense of the divine into the physical world. Though he does not call Dionysius his god by name, it would be difficult to say he had a normal relationship to the divine. Regarding his poems, Dylan stated, “These poems, with all their crudities, doubts, and confusions, are written for the love of Man and in praise of God, and I’d be a damn fool if they weren’t.” (O’Neil)

Dylan’s flame burns brighter than the normal man’s, and it requires more fuel as it grows

to consume its owner. It is in this manner that Dylan can take us in the right ontological direction, from intense physical launching into idealistic spiritual.

(2) Caitlin Thomas

“I’m not happy. She’s not happy. It’s not possible to live with her. It gets more impossible every day. I detest the way we are together. And I detest the way I become with her- it’s always Punch and Judy, kill and make up. It’s always a raging hurricane- you can’t live like that.” (*Dylan*, pg. 58)

Through analysis of the play and the biographical book of the actual woman, I have arrived at some essential elements of Caitlin Thomas. The first question one may wonder is the extent to which Caitlin Thomas is collectively a wife, a woman in her own right, or a personality dependent upon her husband. Caitlin displays a camaraderie with the artistic elite, when she refers to a friend of her father’s the painter Augustus John in clashes with Dylan. Since her marriage to Dylan was so sudden, one may wonder whether or not Caitlin loved her husband. In her biography of Dylan, she clearly states her love and reverence for her husband in a manner that is both compassionate and compelling. (Thomas, Caitlin. *Leftover Life to Kill*. London: Trinity Press, 1957 15)

Both characters have a superlative gift of language, and both seem to fall repeatedly into the same sexual and alcoholic traps. In the Michaels’ play, Caitlin has declared that she is “the woman Dylan’d have been if Dylan had been a woman” (61). Caitlin is another side of Dylan, perhaps the force attempting to preserve her marriage, rescue the Dylan of Wales while in New York, and maintain her own sanity as the two spiral downward.

In Caitlin Thomas' two biographies, she illuminates some grey areas about her relationship with Dylan regarding the extent to which she calmed or enabled his wild behavior. First and foremost, Caitlin states in Leftover Life to Kill that she loved her husband, and she believes he loved her as well. While many may not understand the behaviors they exhibited towards one another, Caitlin emphatically and repeatedly states her affection for the man. In Double Drink Story, she describes the extent to which Dylan enjoyed being cared for, if reluctantly, by the women in his life: "In addition to the coddling he received from his mother and the landlady, Dylan expected me to act as muse and audience. Notwithstanding his low opinion of women's minds and the fact that I was acutely reluctant to play the part he forced on me, I acted as a convenient guinea pig for him in our bogs..." (26) Like her husband, Caitlin practiced poor personal hygiene relative to the bourgeois American public and mocked that society's fears about nature. She rebelled against the constraints of lady-like behavior and struck out by sleeping with other men, drinking, cursing, and brawling. (15) For all of these uncouth attributes, Caitlin seemed not to consider them outright faults, with the exception of her self-medication with sleeping pills. While she retained an attachment to her children and Wales, she spent an increasingly large amount of time in Italy which became a "safe" home- a place less infected with the memory of Dylan. Caitlin may be said to deeply love her husband, but she had no enthusiasm to play his required role of caregiver traditionally prescribed to women of the era.

Mixed with Caitlin's affection for her husband lies a great deal of regret, feeling she took advantage of his brief presence. Regarding her day-to-day relationship to Dylan,

Caitlin gives us an insight to Dylan's life in Wales. Dylan's drunkenness is described in Leftover Life to Kill as he was "blundering down the path, pockets full of bottles and treats." Caitlin also describes her husband as being quite comfortable with lying, telling white lies almost compulsively and without any personal gain. In Double Drink Story, she confesses her insecurities as an hopeful artist living with such a talented and passionate author: "[Dylan] would relentlessly pin me down at the sink where I was scrubbing, in my perfectionist manner, a pile of snowily frothing nappies... he would start booming and intoning in his deep bass voice what to me sounded like a never-ending sermon of senseless, jumbled, mumbled, confusing, strung-together words." (27)

Certainly, Caitlin was a troubled woman living in the shadow of her husband's talent and exorbitant behavior.

In the final analysis the character of Caitlin defines herself by her relationship to the title character. Michaels uses her in conventional exposition about Dylan's history in the play's opening, and she becomes a powerful ticking time-bomb as the play progresses. She and Dylan became so entangled in an abusively co-dependent relationship that their senses of self become obliterated. Caitlin brings out the worst in Dylan, depriving him of the source of his self-worth: his writing. Dylan's description of his marriage in his eventual decision to leave Caitlin provides the final word: "I detest the way we are together. And I detest the way I become with her- it's always Punch and Judy, kill and make up. It's always a raging hurricane- you can't live like that. There's no time out for breath, for life! I'm tired to death of it. And I can't write!" (Dylan, p58)

(3) John Malcolm Brinnin

John Malcolm Brinnin's character provided a majority of the source material for this play. He is a perceptive academic with enough ambition to wade through the obstacles necessary to contact and arrange for Dylan's arrival in America and organize the poet's tour. He is very analytical, but he can appreciate the mysticism of those around him. His biography of Dylan suggests a complete lack of understanding as to what makes Dylan tick, yet he seems awed at the mysterious energy which both created Dylan's poetry and pushed him through life. Brinnin has a clear financial motivation to realize Dylan's success, but he appears more motivated by the sense of adventure Dylan presents. With discernible glee Brinnin describes Dylan's arrival in America as follows: "And all over the academic literary world, hair'll be let down this year, and heels will kick, and the dresses'll catch in zippers, and banana peels shall strew the sidewalks, and pins shall pop balloons and beer shall drop from clouds and people shall cry because we die and laugh because we're born and you and I, Angus Marius, you sick-opphant, shall have the book dust blasted off us and be like kids again." (Dylan, p39)

It is difficult to ascertain whether Brinnin in performance should have a fatherly or brotherly relationship to Dylan. In the text, he seems to play both roles as Dylan's supervisor as well as friend and peer. Through the limited casting process, I am certain that this decision will largely rest upon the talent of the available personnel.

(4) Meg

Meg is written by Michaels as a classy, intellectual woman. She appears to struggle with the divide between her strong moralistic sense and her personal history.

Although she dresses above her class, Meg does not come from wealth and lives modestly. She makes reference to her father dying “of a very bad case of cheap rye.” (Dylan p54) Meg states that she is unimpressed with the men in her life, choosing responsible, capable men while desiring them to be unpredictable and sharp. Her relationship to Dylan seems to be a concession to something she’d been denying about herself: she desires the bad boy drunk.

Meg presents an interesting dilemma for a director. Structurally, she appears to be a powerful ticking time bomb as the delightful temptation to Dylan captivating the audience. We should root for her relationship with Dylan to work out and experience joy when it does. However, the beginning of this relationship is almost entirely one-sided on the surface with Dylan tossing insults, making inappropriate advances, and otherwise making a fool of himself. At least on the surface Sidney Michaels gives us very little opportunity to see the potential for a mutual spark in their relationship, and yet Meg persists. The eventual blooming of Meg’s relationship to Dylan in the second act may come as a surprise to audience members; it may be disliked by critics eager of a more melodramatic foreshadowing, but over-selling Dylan’s relationship to Meg would undercut his relationship with Caitlin. The rules and regulations of Meg, at the end of the play, do not provide Dylan with the wild carnal experiences on which he thrives; if Meg succeeds in saving Dylan, she will have to kill his spirit. We cannot be completely sold on this relationship if we are to fall in love with the Dylan that exists in remainder of the play.

d) Casting

Casting the production requires some planning due to the amount of doubling that should occur. A spreadsheet, included in Appendix G, was created listing each character and cross-referenced with the scenes in which they appear. The Broadway production used sixteen actors, while I have chosen to utilize twelve. My directing advisor recommended small casting in order to prevent a trend wherein overly-entitled university students rebel and spoil a production if they are unsatisfied with the size of their part. The size of the playing space is also a factor, limiting the kinds of images a large cast can create.

Double-casting violates the goals of Realism by increasing the audience's awareness of the fact that they are watching actors in performance. When a single actor plays multiple roles, the audience focuses on the differences and similarities between the two performances. The multi-character actor is first measured in their ability to transform physically and second on their ability to internally commit to the objectives of their character. This focus shift allows for greater freedom in casting away from type and demands a performance style more focused on surface behaviors than the necessarily surging subtext of Realism, which seeks to hide the external ticks and traits of performance.

Strict Realism cannot have been the goal of the original Broadway production, as it used double-casting in its supporting roles. The Broadway production had advantages and limitations this production will not. What is the ideal casting for this production? In a university setting where financing actors' salaries is not a concern, where it is

impossible to match actors of an appropriate age to characters, and where a limited casting pool includes actors inexperienced in character work, what is the ideal amount of double-casting? For me, the characters of Mattock and Annabelle were the pivotal characters in determining which roles to double. Mattock and Annabelle play a prominent role early in the first act, but they also appear for the briefest of moments in the second act. Over the course of the two acts the characters experience a slight character arc in relationship to Dylan Thomas that reinforces his changes over time. Characters existing only in one act have a static relationship to Dylan; it may benefit the production to allow the audience to appreciate each new character with a heightened fascination at the behavior of the actor's character, putting them closer to the position of Dylan Thomas, as an outsider watching a foreign being. The rule for this production will be: a character appearing in one act only will be portrayed by an actor playing multiple roles.

A director must also consider the resulting relationships drawn between characters played by the same actor. For this production, the same actor will enable Dylan's journey as the Bartender, Stage Manager, and Deck Officer: supplying Dylan with alcohol, helping to control him in the backstage aftermath, and finally saying a tribute to his dead body. A second actor will advise Dylan as Jay Henry, Minister, and the Doctor. The actress playing Elena, and Club Woman will dote on Dylan from advanced years while another actress playing Katherine Anne Porter, Miss Wonderland, and Girl will portray women who have no interest in Dylan. Traits of the Reporters will be selected in line with or as foils to their type.

Conclusion to Pre-Production

After analyzing the structure, historical context, and characters within Sidney Michaels' script, I feel prepared to formulate a concept that will highlight the essential truths about Michaels' Dylan Thomas, the world in which he lived, and the world he desired. I enjoyed learning more about the real-life Dylan Thomas, the craftsmanship present in Sidney Michaels' other work, and the inner-workings of the play *Dylan* specifically.

II. Director's Concept

In this section I outline my central concept for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln production of Sidney Michaels' *Dylan*. This concept is uniquely charged to serve this production's location, available cast members, and audience. I highlight several dramatic questions, but focus my concept for both design and performance around the one central idea: Will Dylan Thomas find peace with his creative light?

A. Central Metaphor

Sidney Michaels' *Dylan* put a new face on a classic form: tragedy. Michaels' play was set in the 1950s and based on the life of the lyrical Welsh poet and author. Dylan Thomas wrote the following famous lines of poetry in his famous villanelle:

"Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

The poet's lines provided Sidney Michaels' play with the perfect central metaphor: an aging Dylan Thomas raging against the dying of his own artistic light. As Dylan struggled with the alcohol, women, and fame surrounding him in America, Michaels' Dionysian character enraptured audiences as a man whose flame was both consuming and being consumed by the essence of life. *Dylan* contains a deep and complex romantic relationship, drunken debauchery, immense suffering, spiritual rebirth, and a martyr's death. The text contained powerful, aggressive lines of dialogue as well as humorous

witticisms, physical humor, powerful imagery while taking the audience on a journey full of unexpected events and building towards a final, dreaded moment of release and heartache.

B. Central Dramatic Question: “Will Dylan Thomas find peace with his creative light?”

Breaking down Sidney Michaels’ text according to the Freytag paradigm provided clear structural moments. The play’s inciting incident, Dylan’s leaving Caitlin to accept Brinnin’s offer to tour in America, raised the Central Dramatic Question: “Will Dylan Thomas find peace with his creative light?” Rising Action is well contained in Dylan’s ever-more desperate attempts to fill his void of depression with women and alcohol. Dylan experiences “a reversal of intention” (peripeteia) when his new sober and creative life away from Caitlin has not brought him the peace he needs, his off-stage realization (anagnorisis) comes as a surprise after his apparent success. It brings self-hatred to Dylan and misfortune for all major characters finalized in the climactic act: Dylan’s suicide. The answer to the play’s Central Dramatic Question has now been answered, “No.” We also have the Central Dramatic Action contained in the Climactic Moment: Dylan Thomas deliberately killing himself. Denouement followed in Caitlin’s realization of the tragedy. Sidney Michaels passed another Aristotelian test in his off-stage placement of the anagnorisis to show, rather than tell, audiences upon Dylan’s re-entry that their fears are confirmed; Dylan Thomas will never find peace in life. The arrangement of the incidents have produced fear and pity within the audience as they place themselves in Dylan’s

shoes, caught up in the logical necessity of each cause-and-effect chain of events. As Dylan attempted various tactics to find inner peace, the tragic moment within the suicidal Central Action has produced catharsis. The key to success in Sidney Michaels' *Dylan* rests in directing the audience's investment in the Dramatic Question. That question the director must keep alive throughout the entire production until the question's answer tragically arrives in the climactic act of his suicide.

Seen as a tragedy, *Dylan* also contains important Aristotelian elements of Character and Thought. While ideas about specific characters I will discuss in more detail below, Aristotle believed Character to be the second most important element in a tragedy. Protagonists in a tragedy should begin the play in very high esteem, so that change of fortune from good to bad can be as dynamic as possible. This change "should come about as the result, not of vice, but of some great error or frailty in a character" (Stevenson, Daniel C. "Poetics by Aristotle"). Barbara McManus writes, "The term Aristotle uses here, hamartia, often translated "tragic flaw," has been the subject of much debate. (McManus, Barbara F.. "Outline of Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy in the POETICS"). The meaning of the Greek word is closer to "mistake" than to 'flaw' In tragedy, claims Aristotle, the protagonist will mistakenly bring about his own downfall—not because he is sinful or morally weak, but because he does not know enough. It can also describe "a bad choice," according to Aristotle. The role of hamartia in tragedy comes therefore not from its moral status but from the inevitability of its consequences. Hence peripeteia is really a consequence of one or more self-destructive actions or choices taken in

blindness, leading to results diametrically opposed to those intended.” Sometimes critics term such contradictory outcomes as “tragic irony,” and anagnorisis is “the gaining of the essential knowledge that was previously lacking.” McManus, Barbara F.. "Outline of Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy in the POETICS") The character of Dylan therefore mistakenly brought about his own destruction because he incorrectly diagnosed the source of his own unhappiness. Such an idea lies at the heart of Thought, the third most important element to Aristotle. (McManus, Barbara F.. "Outline of Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy in the POETICS") However, the central idea or proof presented in the play’s actions I describe as “A man must find peace within himself, and not from others.”

C. Other Dramatic Questions

Will Dylan and Caitlin stay together?

Caitlin represents a potential calming influence and contentment for Dylan. Their relationship must contain both Dylan’s flaws as a character (drunken compulsiveness) and his most redeeming attributes (charming inspiration). Dylan’s interactions with Caitlin offer the audience a brief calm and centeredness that never comes to fruition with other possible solutions to his anxiety; she becomes his only hope.

Can Dylan succeed on the tour?

Dylan believes money will provide him with a trouble-free life. It is therefore a potential solution to his unrest. However, Dylan’s success becomes an enabler to his character

flaws (drunken womanizing) rather than a solution to that which troubles him (financial instability).

How long will Caitlin put up with Dylan's behavior?

As the play moves forward, Caitlin is established by default as a necessary component of Dylan's peace. As he continues to make missteps with her, we may wonder how long she remains an option for him. Caitlin is also a potential destructive force in his life by amplifying his negative qualities as well as his positive ones. Essentially a catalyst character, the more Dylan abuses her, the more he becomes at war with himself.

Will Dylan destroy his career?

Dylan must not allow his flaws to destroy his relationships with those supporting his career. So long as a return to the opening stasis of the play is unbearable, Dylan's destiny is tied to his ability to keep the money coming in, whether or not he is able to use its potential for good.

Will Dylan find happiness with Meg?

Meg represents a double-edged sword for Dylan, cutting him off from, perhaps his only source of peace in Caitlin while clearing away the other elements which bring his destruction (alcohol and women).

Will Dylan drink himself to death?

Later in the play, the audience must feel that Dylan may never find a peace within his consciousness, because he will run out of time and his body will shut down from the abuses it has suffered. Once Dylan is sober, we must feel his unease and constant desire to fall off the wagon.

D. Concept for Design Elements

1. Scenic Design Concept

I have built the directing concept for *Dylan* on the dramatic structure and central metaphor of the play. That metaphor is Dylan Thomas as a Dionysian character who has touched the essence of life. He attempts to reconnect with that life force which ends in his own death. Dylan's poetry provides the unifying through-line of the play. The life of the poet is a series of dynamic descriptions composed of elements found in the natural world. To capture the poetic and lyrical quality of the poet Dylan Thomas, this production should strive to live in the same poetry and lyricism. Dylan's poetry uses descriptions of the physical world in discussions of the ethereal unknowns. For the purposes of this production, the elements of earth, wind, water, and fire ground the play in earthly reality and provide impressions of other-worldly influences.

Understanding the elements as metaphor enables stage design to present the *mise-en-scene* as a language unto itself. Each element should find a way to divide their design so that it may metaphorically participate in both ontological spheres (the physical and the spiritual). Natural earth must connect characters to their past, supported with grounding in organic textures, grime, and wear. Spiritual earth embodies time with scenic elements that are weathered, worn, rounded, and rusted. Natural wind represents literal movement, travel, and wear. Movement can be mechanical and powerful like an engine or slow and organic like dance. Spiritual wind can metaphorically represent emotional and literal distances as well as a major change in thought. Natural water (and all other liquids for

Dylan, such as whiskey) provide nourishment, cleansing, and a wake-up call to the physical world. Spiritual water cleanses the soul of history, sin, guilt, pain, and offers a new beginning. Natural fire primarily inhabits candles and cigarettes, bringing a grounding warmth and light. Fire can emerge as a bit of flare, a ritual spark of distraction, or a flirtation with danger. Spiritual fire is contained in the fiery liquid of the shot glasses, the stars in the sky, the shimmering jewelry of the flirting women, a romantic candle between lovers, or the embers that ignite Dylan's poetic pen.

In order to describe the setting of *Dylan* one must differentiate between the text and the performance, while resolving the dissonance between the demands of the text and the exigencies of the Studio Theatre space.¹ When considering the setting of the play, one must consider the text as a static work or the performance as a living entity. I will discuss elsewhere in this thesis how the environment in which a play is staged affects the aesthetic language of the production. A production can choose to be at odds and fight its environment at its own peril. The realistic style is strongly inferred in the text of *Dylan*, but that style will require a modification if I am to fit the play within the Brechtian environment of the Studio Theatre. The text of *Dylan* is set in "the early 1950's, in America and Wales." The Studio Theatre is however constructed to continually spur the audience's awareness of two central facts during the course of watching a play: that they are sitting in an audience and that they are watching actors perform a play. These facts will come rushing to them as they accidentally catch the eye of fellow audience members,

¹ I will devote a great deal of discussion in this thesis regarding the conversion of the play from proscenium to a black-box environment. Entire aesthetic movements have motivated the creation of each theatrical space, and supplanting a play intended for one into another necessitates changes that cause a ripple effect throughout the design and performance of an entire production.

and in moments of shock or taboo within the text such as Dylan grabbing Meg's breasts, stripping to his boxers, or taking a bath. Therefore, one must also say that this living production of *Dylan* is also "set" in October of the year 2010 in the Studio Theater at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Accepting the play's environment as a weakness prohibitive to realistic scenic design and moving conceptually toward abstraction destroys the ontological flow of the text, trapping the play in the realm of ideas. Insisting on a realistic scenic design would ruin the tempo of the play because of the intolerable amount of time it would take to make transitions between scene changes.

A "magical minimalism" within Realism is the solution to the scenic dilemma. Dylan's ontological reach for the mystics supports the idea that there is "more than meets the eye" while restating the need for "what meets the eye" to appear grounded in the realm of Realism. A scenic design wherein set pieces transform to become other set pieces further supports this solution. Finally, accenting those elements in nature which, wherever they meet, generate an intrinsic sensation in the human body of reverence (water, wind, earth, fire).

The function, tempo, metaphorical, and thematic values contained within the scenic elements of Dylan's text are beautifully crafted. It will be important to preserve the most important scenic images affecting the mood and meaning of the play within the laboratory environment.

- The climactic moment of the play requires three separate 'worlds' played simultaneously: Caitlin's home in Wales, Meg's apartment in New York City, and

Dylan in the White Horse saloon. It's important that all three domains have a different feel associated with each character.

- Welsh Boathouse stairs and the “Tara-esque” staircase at the home of Elena Henry must present the audience with a sense of grande luxury. Dylan must be presented with the realistic option of climbing the ‘social ladder’ within the scene. Caitlin first descends to greet Dylan to start the play, Dylan sits upon them to sober up and then attempts to climb the ‘social ladder’ with Elena, and steps are a part of the ‘upper deck’ on the ship representing an escape or transitioning meditative period above the chaos of their lives below.
- Dylan’s bath at Meg’s is an important cleansing moment spiritually and also provides a major physical shift in the direction of the play. Dylan must take an actual bath in order for Meg to arrive at her decision to allow him to stay the night. It represents a stripping down of his character, cleansing, baptism, born again moment in his life. A wet towel just won’t do to wash away the sins of a character like Dylan.
- A bed for two. Dylan and Caitlin in bed. I feel the bed must appear to be both soft and real. Multiple layers of fabric/ inviting. The presence of a bed in Dylan’s scene with Meg adds enormous sexual power, and the “same” bed when Dylan and Caitlin awake after a bender is a metaphor for the problems of their marriage/ truth about their future as a couple awakening.
- Christmas Trees/Stars- Stars are closely associated with Wales in the play, come to symbolize Dylan’s “dying light” in the city, and are a part of a deliberate orchestration of the playwright in the climactic build with the multi-location Christmas tree scenes.

However, the stars in the sky are less about God/Hope/Space or other things in the upward direction and more about Dylan's connection to Wales/himself/his talent.

2. Projection Design Concept

Projections are an all or nothing affair. They can easily upstage the action on stage and distract from the performance. In the original design, projections were intended to play constantly during the performance functioning as a versatile scenic element that could easily and vividly provide the rapid changes in location required by the text. The biggest advantages to such projections were the animated images of nature in exterior scenes. For example, a sunrise tracking over different panels throughout a scene or a series of night and day skies to advance time between scenes. In terms of the concept, the physical set provided the material world that restrained Dylan while projections could provide a contrasting magical reality in line with the world of ideas in Dylan's poetry. This magical realism enabled the set to transform before the eyes of the audience as Dylan truly saw it. The projections could also be utilized in a psychological manner to flash idealized images of Caitlin or Wales as Dylan thought of his home life. Switching between images of magical realism and psychological idealism, the projections were to both increase our sense of time and location as well as our understanding of Dylan's connection to the inspiration behind his poetry.

After watching some of a 'Behind the Scenes' documentary for the 2006 Las Vegas Cirque de Soleil show *Love* featuring the music of The Beatles, I was struck by some of the compelling imagery contained in their projections. First, they had a cityscape

in the foreground displayed in silhouette (something Dylan is immediately asked about when arriving in NYC). The cityscape had a magical, changing, time-lapse sky in full color playing in the background over the black foreground. Second, they used limited projections in an otherwise blacked-out area of the stage to produce some very compelling, scenic environments that had the ability to appear and change magically. The Cirque show also used this area to display text, which could be useful while Dylan read his poetry or to float words of his poems during other key moments of the production. Third, Cirque made use of multiple projectors by having two separate images playing in synch and then animating elements that flew between the two screens in a game of catch. And finally, a physical Volkswagen Beetle that a chorus separated into different components, providing new surfaces on which to project, inspired me. Perhaps the plane or boat in *Dylan* could exist in a similar manner?

As projections are always a danger being ineffective for reasons of clarity, conceptual necessity, or proper focus, the initial conceptions for *Dylan* pay special attention to these elements. Environmental projections are to be static or to contain only the most subtle and slow animations, for example: changing from a night sky to a morning sunrise over the course of ten minutes. Psychological projections would only take place in static moments where the characters on the stage direct focus or pause and give way to the action of the projections. Moments of transition or direct interaction can help the projections to provide a visual soundtrack to a monologue or poetry reading.

Concerning the placement of the projections, an earliest concept involved a proscenium stage and included scenic stills projected over multiple panels and animated with sky replacement technology altering the background to produce sunsets, starry night skies, and the ocean voyage in a manner similar to the Cirque show. Upon converting the performance to the black-box theatre, the projections moved to the major vertical spaces in the scenic design on either end of the alley as well as a vertical projection on the floor of the space to be used primarily during transitions.

In summation, the projection design involved the animation of two exterior environments, Wales and New York City, under different lighting conditions to invoke a magical sense of the environments in which Dylan traveled. It also involved images of Caitlin and Dylan superimposed on those images (or at times hovering in space during moments of lighting isolation) to invoke a psychological sense of Dylan's struggles, hopes, dreams, desires, and poetry.

3. Lighting Design Concept

Light is a major symbol in the play for Dylan, with the juxtaposition of stars going on Christmas trees and out in the sky at the end. Lighting will have to isolate stage areas to carve off the space into different environments. In addition to the challenges presented by the multiple locations in the play, lighting will also be called upon to operate in a spiritual realm wherein Dylan communicates to his 'gods' as he struggles with issues.

4. Costume Design Concept

Costumes should be accurate to the periods and locations. While lighting, scenic, and sound designs will be depicting the inner life of Dylan through earth, water, wind, and fire; costume should run in the opposite direction, depicting the perceptions of the outer world. Costumes should match the acting style, grounding us in realism, leaving scenic, music, and lighting elements to carry the audience along a more symbolic and melodramatic arc.

Early Costume Character Notes:

Dylan/Caitlin- Both characters should feel ‘a mess’. Dionysus. Fire and earth. Dusty and wind blown. Wild, mismatched, layered, and frumpy, unkempt. Perhaps some of the clothing they have is of high quality (when in America) but not worn properly. Highly textured fabrics. In general, there is also an arc from poverty to ill-fitting wealth wherein some sleek piece of wardrobe is perhaps layered on poorly or worn improperly.

Brinnin- Dylan’s left brain. Responsible. Dull. Neat and organized. Neutral, muddled colors, browns that are clean, and dim. Brinnin should feel wet with sweat, or a tiny bit oily from over-grooming. A strong after-shave scent in the small space would be nice.

Meg- Smooth, healing water. Calming breeze. Feet firmly on the ground, but head in the sky. Meg has a spark behind her, but she mostly keeps her embers well hidden.

Angus- Clean, black and white, blowhard with plenty of gusto and heat. Steam. Smooth.

Elena- A breeze on your backside and up your spine. Water down your neck. Swift and sparkling. Dirty underneath, but shining artificially on the surface.

Mattock and others will largely depend on body-type/casting choices.

5. Sound Design Concept

Sound design will largely be utilized in the inverse manner as lighting, to paint the feel of locations outside the space. The script's references to sound are in-line with the realism/idealism concept, listing both realistic environmental sound-scaping to establish locations as well as more idealistic sounds that generate audio metaphors and provide a greater understanding of Dylan's inner world.

Sound will be a major focus of this production, calling attention to itself more than is typical in a theatrical production. The first moment of the play will include the lowering of a microphone (from the theatrical space) to allow Dylan Thomas to recite his poem "Do Not Go Gentle". Microphone use within the confines of Realism will be of period look and sound. Hidden microphones may also be used to give power to moments.

Speaker placement will also help to create a sense that the theatrical space, itself, is participating in the story. By placing some sounds in the appropriate location for realism, we will already have quite a few location demands on the sound designer. However, the script also calls for more metaphorical sound-scaping that traverses the theatrical space like an ocean wave washing over the surf. Surround-sound fading capabilities for the master tracks will be required as well as a stereo mix playing different sounds (Wales and New York) out of two different speakers (stage right and left) at varying levels.

6. Concept for Actor Performance

Ultimately, the success of this production will rest in the hands of the actors, specifically the audience's ability to connect to Dylan Thomas. Reviews of the Broadway production clearly state the same assertion: "While Peter Glenville's sure directional hand guides, the drama. It is Sir Alec Guinness (Dylan) who ultimately and triumphantly brings the cheering audience to its feet as the final curtain falls." (The Post Standard) It will be important to ground Dylan early in the fiery, explosive, and romantic first scene to set the hook within the audience. A major window into Dylan's soul, if not portions of the man himself, the roles of Meg and Caitlin must be viewed primarily as part of Dylan's journey carrying the audience along Dylan's path. Brinnin, on the other hand, is important to the success of the play for other reasons. Brinnin is the audience, the Everyman. We must connect to Brinnin as a fellow observer, a reluctant enabler bringing both Dylan's rise and demise.

As the scenic design participates in two different aesthetic modes, the acting will as well. Acting will be grounded in realism throughout the body of scenes, however transitions will be held in a more choral, archetype, ritualistic fashion. Based in an open, neutral movement, the actors will "take on" their characters at the top of scenes and "return to neutral" at the end. Far too often, actors and directors do not address the truths contained and communicated to the audience within the "brown-out" transitions. Without a lighting environment that provides true and consistent black-outs, such transitions will need to be addressed. Furthermore, since some members of the cast will be performing

multiple roles and unique traits like skin color and body-type will prevent any kind of illusion that a new actor portrays each character; the unavoidable truth that this is a theatrical production must be embraced. Consistent with the scenic environment, discussed below, the actors will face the challenge of pulling the audience into rapidly changing scenes without denying the additional given circumstance that their performance takes place in a theatre. The best solution is utilize the wide variety of supporting characters in a heightened and clear performance style that, when combined with costumes, immediately provides the necessary information regarding location and tone to establishes the environment in which our more naturalistic leads will be able to operate.

Regarding the physicality and movement of the play, the lead actors will be extremely grounded within the space. The central characters will spend a great deal of time on the steps and floor, leaning on bars, bedposts, and door frames while the supporting roles will provide energy and imagery to the scenes. Special attention will be paid to the actors' connection to props with supporting roles utilizing them in a more indicative manner than the leads, who must endow them into their naturalistic world. The chorus will sweep in new environments ahead of the major characters, much as the background characters are used to wipe the frame when transitioning scenes in a movie.

E. Discussion of Design Choices

1.Scenic Design Choices:

INCORPORATING THE NEW SCENIC ENVIRONMENT

When preparing the aesthetic language of the scenic environment, one must consider the theatrical space as a part of the mise-en-scene. While I would have preferred an “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” approach to this play, the placement of *Dylan* in the black-box Studio Theatre rather than the proscenium stage for which it was written “broke” the scenic language of this play, prohibiting nearly every scenic image and transition created by the playwright. The cinematic slice-of-life realism wherein audiences can sit back and lose themselves in the story was to be exchanged for the conscious theatricality of the laboratory environment. In comparison to the aesthetic language of a proscenium stage, the language of a black-box theatre, sans a fourth wall, is a product of the Artaudian/Brechtian aesthetic communicating to the audience from the moment of their entrance and by its arrangement and design which displays in plain view all of its inner-workings, that this production possesses a self-awareness concerning its own theatricality. (Bruner)

The laboratory theatre, or black box, environment possesses a different axiological language than proscenium views, meaning the source of truth and the aesthetic basis for which every new piece of information is understood is the same self-referential aesthetic that flourishes in circus tents, magic shows, and boxing rings. For the audience, the ontological truths of the outer world remain as the play begins: they are still present in their bodies, which currently reside in a theatre in Lincoln, Nebraska. Non-

proscenium seating arrangements necessitate the audience's increased awareness of themselves vis-a-vis the mirrored visual other audience members rather than the transportive effect of the unobstructed view provided by proscenium arrangements which ask the audience to lose themselves in the play. Instead, black-box environments heighten the audience's awareness of their own presence and surroundings, causing an increased ecstasy, paranoia, and general sensitivity. It is my experience that audiences in black box theatres experience a stronger reaction to the portrayal of all social taboo including lewd language, sexuality, and political statements. They are aware that, just as they are measuring the response of others, others are observing them. Self-aware spectators become de facto accomplices to such actions and feel as though they are approving of the language or actions by their very presence.

Precisely because the black-box environment was established to increase self-awareness, an audience's has a limited ability to experience the catharsis of realism, through projection and the loss of self. Instead, audiences will continuously be reminded that they are watching a play and experience a heightened awareness of self. This form of ontological movement, from the theatrical world of the play to the physical world of the spectator and back again, is similar to the journey of Dylan Thomas in the production. As a result of setting the production in an environment with differing aesthetic values, or axiology, than its playwright intended, the audience will experience these axiological shifts in much the same way Dylan Thomas experiences ontological ones.

AESTHETIC PROCESS

As a result of the axiological values of the performance location, my goals in the direction *Dylan* have changed greatly from the original proposal. While initial conceptions sought to organize the images of the text “as-written” in a proscenium theatre, the aesthetic language and limitations of the black box space in which it is assigned eliminates the ability to “perform-as-written” most of the of the central imagery, language, and tempo of the playwright. “In One” scenes, intended to be performed in front of a lowered curtain while scene-changes for future scenes occur behind, do not function properly in a studio theatre, nor can one bring in a Tara-esque grande staircase without disrupting the flow of the production. Many of the play’s scenes depend heavily on the ontological authenticity in the physical environment surrounding the characters. The act of reaching toward the spiritual world requires, first, an ontological grounding in the physical, meaning the natural world must be the obvious source of truth for the audience visually. Creating a scenic environment comprised of abstractions require the audience move from the world of form and ideas and work toward the text’s ontological grounding in the physical realm, as presented by the dialogue and subject matter. In a Greek play about a god attempting to connect to humanity, the scenic design would be moving in the correct ontological direction: grounded in ideals and moving toward the physical. *Dylan*, on the other hand, is a play that reaches up physical realities and toward poetic abstractions and ideals. Eliminating or reversing this ontological motion by grounding it in the abstract would detach Dylan Thomas from his struggles with

humanity and deflate Dylan's great reach for higher truth through the use of poetic language.

SCENIC DESIGN PROCESS

Although it would be easier to generate a set design using the versatility of abstraction, scenic design for *Dylan* must balance the need to represent multiple locations quickly and effectively with the need to ground the environment of the production in realism. In production meetings, the design faculty spoke against my impulse to stick with a modified realism and applied pressure to alter my directorial objective and generate a mise-en-scene which would allow abstractions. I stated that I understood the benefits of abstractions, but that they were prohibited. It was later that I was able to articulate the reasoning: they pull from the realm of ideas and would ground the play in a conceptual realm, disconnected from the natural world and forcing the dramatic arc into ontological stagnation. It is true that the benefits of moving in an abstract direction would have eased a numerous staging concerns, and my student designers longed for the quick solution.

The faculty's input on the matter of abstraction vs. a representational aesthetic had a detrimental effect on the design process. When the easier path of abstraction had been bona fide by their superior, it caused my scenic designer to resent dealing with the numerous scenic demands of the play in a literal, representational manner. Certainly the plan the faculty offered would be easier, and why would I not allow it? Abstract, conceptual designs are also more satisfying to most designers, are easier to defend in the

classroom, require less research, and are limited by fewer external factors. We would have had a large portion of the scenic design finished in the first week using abstractions. I did not have enough answers in the early meetings to shut down these damaging discussions, which continued to produce offerings in abstraction for weeks, but I knew instinctively that abstraction in design was a mistake. As a result, my scenic designer repeatedly resisted direct requests for a more realistic set, sticking with abstraction at first, and then failing to produce any product at all. We were able to discuss the play verbally without confusion, but our discussions never appeared upon the page. Multiple deadlines were missed. After two months of repeating and restating, some progress began to take shape. It took the entire summer to get a working groundplan without yet incorporating shape, color, or texture.

The tendency of the faculty designers to direct the central aesthetic language of a production from an ease-of-design point-of-view has proven to be a great struggle to overcome. Creativity is defined as “the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, etc.” (Dictionary.com) While design faculty and students alike are adept at identifying possible obstacles to overcome when presented with a design concept, identifying a multitude of solvable problems generates a sensation of disapproval with the stated concept. Occasionally, flimsy and blanket “technical” reasons were given to shut down an idea; this was most common in the design team’s resistance to the incorporation of projections into the scenic design. Instead of looking for the multitude of options and

inspirations one could construct around the design concept, the design team would push back with an alternate aesthetic that was easier to design: abstraction. As a result, the designers generated few scenic elements contained within the show. No inspirational design research was presented in the early stages of design, though literal/historical images were shown. In general, the scenic design process suffered from operating in an overly literal and technical manner as the team resisted the need to solve the problems presented by the black-box environment while remaining consistent with the production concept.

Aesthetic rules were frequently not incorporated into the design solutions. It is possible the terms used to describe the aesthetic world were not fully understood, but no questions went unanswered in production meetings and one-on-one communications were productive up to the point where renderings were required. At this moment, I would predict the faculty response to the end design will fall on one side or the other of the catch twenty-two wrought by the laboratory theatrical space: either the scenic transitions will not happen smoothly enough or the design will be criticized for possessing areas with both minimalist (chosen only for the necessity of scenic transitions) and realistic aesthetics (necessary to satisfy textual events and enable the correct ontological movement).

SELECTION OF ALLEY STAGING

With the play's scenic design leading the way, a new aesthetic language had to also be formed to deal with the transitioning moments between each scene's parenthetical

realism that allowed us to set up grand scenic moments yet produce rapid location changes. I was unsatisfied with the most common layout of the Studio performance space during my time at the university: a compromised half or three-quarter thrust wherein movement to a downstage scenic anchor causes an actor's position to grow weaker as their face becomes hidden to a larger and larger portion of the audience. Such a compromise might be appropriate in a Scientifically Naturalistic, Hostilely Fatalistic, or Pensively Existentialist production where the audience is to consider the flawed characters from a distance and focus on a play's philosophical arguments or linguistic verbosity. Staging the performance In-The-Round would allow for the creation of sculptural imagery, forcing the audience to view the body of the actors before them primarily, depriving them access to the eyes' window to the soul well over half the time. At the expense of constant view of an actor's eyes, language and sculpture become the most powerful vehicles available to such an audience, but the problem of the downstage cross remains. A production such as *Dylan* containing Classical Heroism, Spiritual Openness, and Heightened Language requires powerful vantages in full view of the audience with which to connect to the gods or share the sufferings of human existence. Other than proscenium staging, alley staging is the only dramatic environment that can preserve the power of the downstage cross while providing nearly the same amount of eye contact with the audience. Both ends of the alley provide proscenium environments for a majority of the audience, enabling two actors to perform a simultaneous downstage cross in opposite directions, at the same time, and with the same effectiveness.

Problem-solving using alley staging without falling into abstractions proved to be rocky. Initially, the thought was to position the alley diagonally in the space creating a long, narrow strip that utilized an exit in the neighboring Howell stage. This design allowed for more space than usual for audiences and offered three potential entrances. However, we found that we were not able to convey the scenic demands of the play in the proper style. The scenic designer rotated the alley perpendicular to the stage manager's booth placing one end underneath an overhanging wall. Instead of viewing the overhanging wall as a hindrance, we utilized it as a potential source of performing scenes "In One" as the play demands. A curtain will be hung on the front of the overhang, becoming a couple of locations in its own right as well as enabling set changes and reveals.

The use of the double proscenium effect in alley staging presented numerous advantages. The scenes requiring realistic use of numerous props appear almost exclusively in the tavern and bedroom scenes. It is the necessity of these props that ties the play most heavily in realism. The curtain convention reveals a realistic set housed within a more minimalist environment. It becomes a vaudevillian convention of the theatrical space as a whole and participates in the magical minimalistic realism aesthetic wherein the physical environment housing the play participates in the story-telling. Rear-projection screens were to be inserted behind the bar/bedroom wall, enabling scene changes through the projection of changing scenic environments as well as more psychological images throughout the entirety of the play. The walls were to be moved inward to enable this, but we never reached this step in the design process. Screens were

also to be added on the opposite side of the stage which included a double stairway. A center platform containing a hidden tub provided levels and connected the two environments.

The intent of our final scenic selection might be described as a lyrical minimalism or representational realism that may be flexible enough to produce the required locations smoothly while effective in grounding Dylan in realism and allowing his poetry to move us in the correct ontological direction: a broken man praying to his Dionysian god. A double staircase on stage right will be home to both the Thomas' boathouse in Wales as well as the Antoine's Tera-esque grande staircase. A middle platform integrating the curves of a bottle connects the two ends and housing a hinged floor that can reveal the bathtub in Meg's apartment will receive light scenic additions to represent larger locations. A curtain on the stage left over-hang opens and closes to establish the burlesque stage, and the back-stage before one of Dylan's poetry readings. Behind the curtain two scenic environments are exchanged: the White Horse pub and the various hotel rooms throughout the play. If enough realistic accents exist on stage right and center while a strong, unifying line is established between each side of the alley, the scenic design will be both a diverse and flexible home for our actors.

LIMITATIONS OF ACADEMIC PROCESS

Producing the play's key design elements over the course of the summer proved to be more difficult than necessary. The role of the producer is to acquire, incentivize, enable, and organize the talent who is to create a production. After assigning design roles

and mentors to the production team, the presence of a producer during the summer months was generally absent. The producer also determined that they would not find a projection designer or an experienced projection technician to support the thesis requirement for this production. The projection design processes suffered as I was left on my own to try to set deadlines, organize meetings, and receive output from the designers.

Absent an independent desire to work, one can motivate others using the proverbial “carrot and the stick,” but without the support of a producer, I found myself without either tool at my disposal. While face-to-face discussions seemed to be very refreshing and productive, communication with the student designers outside of meetings became almost entirely one-sided. Mutually agreed-upon deadlines were ignored with no response to inquiries about progress. Within meetings, notes on design work were frequently not taken and so, later, lacked precision or were completely forgotten. There were many moments when I would have fired the student designers in a professional environment for a lack communication, follow-through, and production.

On one important occasion, the scenic designer resisted an idea posed by the director to fill a production problem. In a backwards arrangement, technical problems were presented by the designer and solved by the director. When the workable solution was rejected out-of-hand, an alternate solution remained undetermined despite months of explanations and attention. If appeals were made for help from a faculty mentor, some progress would be made in the following week. However, the process of expecting initial work and not finding it, requesting work and not finding it again, asking a faculty mentor for help and then finally getting some work has caused almost every step of the design

process to take an additional three to four weeks. It also prohibited the natural growth of a design process because the feat of producing a tangible design image seemed so laborious that any requests for changes were received as a personal attack, even if what was eventually produced directly contradicted earlier conversations.

With rehearsals beginning, major scenic demands had yet to be met. Faculty mentors seemed content with the progress, but this production is paced weeks behind any other production for which I've directed. In the end, I predict a power struggle and unsatisfied designers who feel as though their design was ripped from their fingers in order to meet the demands of the production clearly articulated to them throughout the summer. In order to salvage key moments in the play, I will have to step in and dictate to the designer or solidify the missing design areas with the technical director myself. Patience is a virtue, but deadlines are an objective reality; the show must go on, as they say. When the first design rendering does arrive at the final deadline, it will therefore also be the last design rendering.

I attribute most of these limitations to the producer-absent power structure made worse by the lack of authority given to a student director by design faculty mentors. (It is much more difficult to wrest authority not initially granted than to hold the authority others bestow upon you; it is impossible to wrest it from those who hold the academic careers of your designers in their hands.) As rehearsals are about to begin, I am left wondering why a series of earlier, graded deadlines have not been established in the actual production design process, as they were in the design courses I took in an earlier semester at this university. In the end, I believe it is the grading process that is most

damaging to the design process as the students behave cautiously and do only the minimal amount of work commissioned by their design advisor in a transaction of economy, paying in only so much labor as is required to acquire the a grade, rather than a quality design.

2. Projection Design Choices:

The failed incorporation of projections into scenic and lighting design is a direct result of design mentors expressing their own design biases without consideration of the aesthetic and academic requirements of the director; there is no better example of this difficult dynamic than in the use of projections. In the initial decision to use alley staging, a number of scenic solutions were made possible by the incorporation of projections into the design. The incorporation of projections into a play is a dangerous decision as projections can easily be washed out by stage-lighting or upstage an actor undesirably. As I was not presented a projection designer by the producer and knowing the dearth of technical abilities of overly-busy potential candidates that I might attempt to recruit on my own as a absurdly hefty personal favor, I elected to design the projections myself over the course of the summer using my comparably vast experience shooting and manipulating video earned in Los Angeles. I laid out a detailed design concept incorporating either/both heightened physical and idealized projections into each scene that could be modified to fit a wide range of projection spaces and sizes.

PROJECTION DESIGN PROCESS

I came upon an immediate problem in design meetings; the scenic designer did not want to modify/compromise their design ideas to enable the use of projections. Design faculty mentors, whom I later learned were unaware of the thesis projection design requirement in this production, enforced the student scenic designer's territory and endorsed his reluctance to make modifications. For two months it was stated that incorporating projections in the manner requested was impossible. I tried to explain a few creative solutions to the problems they raised, but my suggestions were rebuffed with hostility. As the director, I was not to tell them how to do their job; I was only to ask them what they thought was possible to do. I soon learned that what was possible for a designer was most closely aligned with what was desirable to a designer.

As a the projections designer, I was hamstrung by the technical staff, unable to move forward on any actual design files until I knew the size, shape, and location of the scenic designs. Knowing my projection design would have to be flexible, I then requested a rudimentary knowledge of the software and computers available to run the projected video, detailed knowledge of the lens angle, lux/luminance of the bulb, and method of projection. This information was flatly denied until rehearsals were to begin for *Dylan*, and I would become unavailable. Faced with a projections technician supported by the lighting design mentor unwilling to provide me, the projections designer, with the most basic and essential information about the tools being used to generate the projections, I was unable to move. The summer came and went. Armed with the requested information, design work could have begun even withstanding the lack of cooperation from the scenic

elements. However, as the production designer, I was being asked to project onto a non-existent space from an undetermined location with an undetermined instrument powered by undetermined computers.

The death of the incorporated projections within the scenic design into the production of *Dylan* came after a heated production meeting. The faculty mentor for scenic design stated the need to press on and make a white model using the current scenic design. The scenic modifications to incorporate projection spaces had been requested for two months and had grown insistent over the previous two weeks, but would be ignored. After losing in an argument of wills over the fate of the projections, fighting tooth and nail, and accusing the design team of an uncreative attitude, I was determined to be more amiable. I had lost the central battle as a designer and now had to regain my standing as a director. As the meeting progressed I nodded and made remarks of general affirmation, forbidding myself to point out design elements that were unchanged or contradicted our earlier discussions. A white model of the set was presented. Although there were glaring holes that had not yet been developed, it was a sufficient set realizing, for the first time, many elements from our earlier discussions. It was progress. We continued on this way, and when everyone had spoken in turn, a design faculty mentor declared this meeting to have been the first good meeting we'd had. I had yet to speak in any significant way, and so it was at that time that I mentioned the complete removal of the projections from the production design. I was surprised to be informing the design faculty that the incorporation of projections was a design requirement for this production. It was suggested that the requirement be changed. Another mentor put forward the logic that the

projections represent a culmination in in the two realms of the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film. I then informed the design team of a “Plan B” design concept utilizing projections on the floor only, and only during the transition scenes. This idea, which didn’t require any concessions from other design elements, was well-received and became the policy moving forward.

One week before auditions the sound designer, who works professionally and had unfortunately been absent from the earlier projection design discussions, began casually suggesting the very kinds of projections I had been requesting. Although he stated that he would need to know the very specifications I’d requested, his superior technical knowledge and experience easily deflected their objections and provided creative opportunities I had never considered. Without knowledgeable faculty leadership providing a wider-vantage on the nearly limitless possibilities projections provide, the creative and effective incorporation of projection design into theatrical productions will continue to fail.

As a director I feel removing the majority of the projections was a wise and safe move within this environment. I’d already spent too much political capital attempting to satisfy this thesis requirement. Another method would have to be found. Although I was the projections designer, viewing the designer as a separate member of the design team brought clarity. The projections designer had fought nobly, even embarrassingly, and desperately at times. In the end, the faculty supported the scenic designer’s effort to completely box the projections out of the design process. As the projections designer, I had nothing to project upon, had none of the information required regarding his tools, and

had little time to properly generate images before rehearsals began and his time would be spent as a director. Projections will no longer be capable of upstaging the actors and will play a key part of the “water” element in the design concept. The projections will now hit the most powerful and widely views part of the stage, can participate unobtrusively, and will accent the most powerful moment in the script.

PROJECTION DESIGN ALTERNATIVE

The projection design as rehearsals are beginning consists of the following: moving, churning water projected onto each side of the rise of steps on the central platforming in the middle of the stage. These projections will be shown during the journey of Dylan and Caitlin to and from Wales and New York. The projections provide a number of ancillary benefits including additional time to change costumes, loud noise to cover cumbersome scenic transitions, and a chance to establish an audio metaphor that will be carried out more subtly during the rest of the play. Since the most significant element about the journey of Dylan and Caitlin is in the new world of ideals, social rules, and celebrity potential, water projections should exist in the realm of ideas, presenting more of a watery feel than a literal/realistic setting of water.

3. Lighting Design Choices:

Lighting design in a laboratory theatre environment is important to provide the missing location information in addition to practical visibility and mood. We can again divide the design into physical and spiritual realms, however because of the conventions

of the theatre, the logic is reversed. Wherein the artificial stage lights of the theatre's environment would normally participate in the spiritual realm (sound, scenic), the artificial stage lights will be used in the physical realities of the play. Candles and on-set practical (or the appearance of) lighting will be used in times of increased spiritual connectivity.

The multiple locations contained in the script require some attention. Wales will be lit generally softer and warmer in color than New York, which will also use gobos to break hard white light into buildings. Isolating portions of the stage will also be important to convey a sensation of traveling from location to location, and blocking will be contained to help this process. Finally, the placement of the hotel and bar in a location underneath an overhang jutting into the Studio Theatre was a decision made entirely for scenic reasons and limits lighting deep within its recesses. However, only a small amount of the stage action will take place underneath the recess; it mostly functions as a backdrop. And a far larger number of lighting possibilities exist because of the curtain drawn across the overhang.

4. Sound Design Choices:

The sound design for Dylan is well-described by the playwright. It comes as a great relief that the sound design for Sidney Michaels' text is not greatly affected by the black-box performance space. The sound design presented in the text was discussed with the designer in great detail, and one week later I had a sound plot along with sample

sounds. In addition to the cues from the text, our discussion lead us to the concepts of practical vs. applied sound, terms which translate from above as being 'Natural' or 'Spiritual'. For the purposes of this production, all sounds participating mostly in the natural/physical world will be generated live within the space. All sounds participating mostly in the symbolic/metaphorical realm will be pre-recorded and played through with the speakers.

A discussion on intermission music progressed from traditional Irish to ocean waves. Later, in attempting to figure out a way to do the pre-show announcement, we stumbled upon the idea of a 1950's radio station with news clips allowing for more historical context to the Intro audiences. We have also talked about transition music between scenes, for which I feel mixing New York City auto noises with Welsh traditional music by varying degrees may be a very effective psychological key.

Sound will play a large role during transitions, amplifying the loud mechanical sound of the fans in the space as well as adding noise from the story's mode of transportation. Sound will aid in the ripping of the theatrical aura into a new space full of new potentials.

A second brave sound design choice supporting this concept involves the lowering of a modern microphone directly in the center of the stage. This microphone will be spoken into during moments of direct address to the literal audience within the theatre, while a different period microphone will be used to address the period audience within the play (this idea was later scraped as Dylan Thomas only addressed the literal audience).

Sample inspirational sounds include Welsh folk music, the sound of an enormous fan blowing, the sounds of applause turning into the ocean, and a huge live base drum beating. Sound design should be allowed to shock the audience, cutting the production into segments and awakening them to the passage of time and location.

5. Anticipated problems and proposed solutions

The primary problem I anticipate during the production of *Dylan* is in presenting the multiple locations while maintaining a sufficient pace during transitions.

Accomplishing the large number of scenic transitions in a smooth, quiet, and efficient manner will be difficult, and no inventive solutions have been presented, or accepted when I've presented them. Pacing is very important to this production, and I fear a slogging run or two full of scenic disasters. I have attempted to make it very clear to my scenic designer and technical director the importance of being inventive in this manner, but have doubts as to whether there will be any result. Most of my suggestions on improving scenic efficiency have been thrown aside out-of-hand in favor of the simplest, but not most efficient, option. "We'll make it work" is often said in these discussions, possibly leaving out "as good as it can be without my straining myself." I feel the "someone else's problem" syndrome attacking this particular element of the production, as the scenic designer pushes it on the technical director who will push it onto the run-crew to work magic.

Regarding the projections, acquiring the footage for the water projections may be difficult if adequate stock footage is not available at an acceptable price. Playing the

video footage only on the rise of the steps and not the run is the desired look, however there are some questions as to the technical ability of the projection designer. Close work with academic advisors possessing superior technical experience may help to ease these problems.

III. Research Narrative Area II: Production

A. Casting

1. Process

My initial reaction was that casting for *Dylan* went very well. The callbacks were an intense and enjoyable experience for everyone involved. They provided me with some confidence as to the nature of the text, but gave me concerns about the natural tempo of the students. During a callback of the play's opening scene being played by the eventual winners of the roles, Gage Wallace (Dylan) and Jessie Tidball (Caitlin) were in a heated moment. The room was full of physical potential and energy. As directed by the script, Caitlin slapped Dylan on her line. Rather than continuing towards her, Dylan disengaged, sat down, and began reciting his poem. Abandoned, Caitlin hesitantly followed Dylan to the ground and began lightly touching his shoulder, moving down his forearm. The physical effect this had on Dylan was enormous, as if Caitlin had become his intimate puppeteer and owner. As the poem was about to finish, Caitlin shifted once more, wrapping her arm in his and altered her gaze away from his face and out to the sky, opening her heart to the room, listening. Suddenly, the words of Dylan's poem (and the truth behind them) became the focus, resonating through of the room, informed by an intense physical humanity, but reaching above it in the eternal realm of ideas. The lovers were connected: an ontological movement.

2. Casting Results

The casting for the roles in Dylan resulted in the following:

Dylan- Gage Wallace

Caitlin- Jessie Tidball

Brinnin- Sam Hartley

Angus- Peter Swanke

Meg- Emily Martinez

Annabelle- Liza Thalken

Mattock- Zac Franzen

Bartender, Stage Manager, Deck Officer, Reporter- Gary Henderson

Elena, Reporter, Club Woman- Catherine Dvorak

Jay Henry, Drunk, Minister, Doctor, Reporter- Patrick Zatloukal

Stagehand, Waiter, Reporter- Jake Denney

Katherine Anne Porter, Miss Wonderland, Girl, Reporter-Stephanie Bourgeois

3. Rehearsal Schedule

I will prioritize rehearsal time in a manner that has an emphasis on memorization and connected performance. As director can only move one or two mountains at each production, I plan to focus on specific elements in each rehearsal such as tempo, connectedness, themes, or making new tactics. I am also concerned about the accent work the actors must accomplish, however I am reluctant to focus rehearsal time to it. Actors at this university have struggled with far less difficult accents than Welsh, but I believe an overly-technical approach during rehearsal can prevent the other kinds of work that are

frankly more essential to a compelling performance than a superb accent. Actors will be required to work on accents in the same manner as memorization: at home. Struggling with accent work late in a rehearsal process can present extreme barriers for truthful performance. I will guide the actors to work on accents early outside of the rehearsal process, but I feel that only glaring inconsistencies will be treated as the performance date nears.

B. Rehearsal Journal:

Monday, August 30, 2010

Opening words and introductions began our rehearsal, and then the rest of the cast was excused in order to block the first two scenes with Caitlin and Dylan. We opened our bodies a bit, focusing on the feet and the hips. The rehearsal was done in bare feet, though the floor had a lot of screws and debris on it from, what I presume to be, the strike of the set from last semester's show. Blocking rough images and patterns went well. Our first post-blocking run of the material was a speed-thru, click-thru where tempo and removing all possible pauses became the focus while I clicked two drumsticks together. Our second run was focused on finding variety, and the third run was to begin looking at moments of vulnerability, seeking assurance from each other. In general, the actor playing Dylan was told to focus on finding more joyful energies while the actress playing Caitlin was told to focus on power and strength. My hope is to get them to find two

methods of grounding themselves with both their physical scene partner and with their character's hopes and ideals.

Rehearsal coats will be needed as soon as possible, as well as some basic rehearsal furniture and platforming levels.

Tuesday, August 31, 2010

We blocked some of the largest group scenes today. After pre-blocking them a great deal, I had some key moments put in and then let the actors go, fixing along the way. Sometimes I would let them go past a poor blocking moment to see if anything would happen, but usually we'd take it back and fix/clean. I'm learning that Gage has the ability to shift gears beautifully when a moment is pointed out, but he will otherwise steam through a scene, attempting to be the driving force behind it. Dylan does drive a lot of the scenes he is in, but there are likely a few that he doesn't.

The younger actors have a lot of face and mouth tension. They tend to over-work their scenes in a manner typical of performers with musical theatre backgrounds. We will work on this. Older actors are either over-specific with blocking, or are committed to following impulses that spoil stage-images/focus. All the above issues were addressed and showed signs of improvement. Some issues were completely fixed. Blocking and then running the section three times with a focus on tempo and variety with minimal/broad notes has proven to be a very effective manner in which to build the show. Tomorrow we will run the blocked scenes off book.

Wednesday, September 1, 2010

In the third rehearsal, we had our first day off book for the blocked scenes. We started with a breathing and body warm-up. The actors stood on opposite sides of the stages and whispered the lines of one of the larger group scenes while moving in a foot-focused manner, stopping and starting on my touch. The exercise did little for performance, but it got the actors breathing and focused. It also helped to move the new lines in their heads into their bodies.

We then ran through everything twice with small notes and touch-ups before working the scenes in reverse order on the final run, allowing more actors to leave early. An added benefit of this practice was in the alone time it presented with Dylan and Caitlin. Each actor turned in an excellent performance filled with new energies and nice some moments of dynamic chemistry.

The overall tone was very positive. Group scenes progressed immensely. We focused on finding moments, changing tempo, and giving focus. Comments from the rehearsal included: "It feels like we're progressing at a week's pace with every rehearsal" and "Everything is so free. I'm having so much fun building my character and trying different things." We will continue this pattern of blocking each scene, following it with three repetitions, and then expecting it to be off book on the next run.

Thursday, September 2, 2010

Rehearsal was uncommonly fun for all involved. The perfect mixture of humor and silliness outside of scenes while focus was given to the blocking within the scenes.

Some attention was paid to a cast member who I told “not to act”, meaning that he often tries too hard and appears uncomfortable on the stage as an actor. The cast member was able to accomplish this task, but needed to start to incorporate the given circumstances of the scene, rather than “just being himself” in a manner falsely removing himself from the events around him. If someone is asking him a question, he should take in their energy and answer it rather than discount the tone and energy of the questioner. A bit of attention was also paid to (Mattock) to remove the tongue tension that was causing him to appear very youthful and “on” in a musical theatre sense of the word. At the end of rehearsal, we did some side work, adjusting body positions and practicing a lower physical centering.

Friday, September 3, 2010

A now tired cast gave a whole-hearted effort today as we finished blocking Act I. The burlesque will be fun; the actress playing Miss Wonderland requested to do her own research and choreograph the number. Dylan and Caitlin had a nice moment when everyone else left, improving each time. The actor playing Dylan was trying to pump too much emotion into the scene (certainly for this early in the process), and we talked about letting the blocking, lighting, and text do more of the work. Two days off, and then we’ll return with the entire first act off book! So far there have been very few staging issues, however transitions between scenes may become an issue. Blocking in the White Horse Tavern can be tight at times, but I believe we’ve done a good job of controlling focus.

Monday, September 6, 2010

This was a rehearsal requiring memorization of the second half of Act One. It went really well compared to my expectations. The first run of the scene was expectedly rough. On the second run, each character was required to find a moment to laugh in each scene; pacing and general chemistry improved. The third time through those who didn't laugh were required to once more, and all were challenged to surprise each other (in character) in every scene they were in. The chemistry and sense of 'nowness' caused by these improvisational moments were amazing. Although there were still a few paraphrased, dropped, or called for lines, the play began to take shape, and the actors found a new mode of performance. We were officially acting. All actors not in the current scenes were watching, riveted with the spontaneity in performance. There were some bad choices- some deliberately so as the cast tested my commitment to this rehearsal style- but far more moments were good to groundbreaking in terms of individual performances.

Tuesday, September 7, 2010

Today we blocked three two-person scenes in Act Two with tired actors who had stayed up all night working on homework. Still, progress was made and each scene had found its shape and was starting to identify some very nice beats before we ended. Tomorrow is the largest group scene of the play, but rarely are multiple actors on stage at the same time. My hardest staging work is behind me, however some scenes will need to be revisited as the set design lost a key door I'd been requesting for a couple of weeks that enabled quick exits. I'll have to see how much things are affected by the change in runs.

Wednesday, September 8, 2010

We blocked scene five of Act Two. It's an eleven page scene full of multiple entrances and exits. It exposes the cast's weaknesses in quickly establishing relationships with new characters, finding the subtext of each interaction, and considering the breadth of the obstacles. We primarily worked on ramping the scene up to the proper pacing and made major changes to some of the cast's initial character choices. I made an attempt to bring out more subtext and varied choices in the scene, but it fell flat as the actors were still trying to wrap themselves around the beat to beat movement of the scene.

In nearly every unit, each character's dialogue is largely focused upon a character not in the scene. More than any other moment in the play, the actors find it difficult to understand the behaviors, motivations, and history of their characters. The time period, social class, political beliefs, and indirect tactics employed make it difficult for them to dive in. Subtlety and variety in acting tactics are lacking. When the scene is memorized, we will work on establishing more detailed backgrounds for each character.

Interestingly, this scene is the first one in the play wherein the energy and truth in the scene is bubbling almost entirely below the surface. Act Two contains much more of this type of dramatic action than Act One, and actors must work to bring a great deal more of the given circumstances into their performance rather than playing at a gut/surface level.

Thursday, September 9, 2010

The actor playing Mattock is in the hospital due to seizures. We're in a holding pattern to see how this will play out, but it's likely that an understudy will be needed as the seizures are irregular and unpredictable. This is unfortunate.

Actors entered the rehearsal in general distress. Many were fatigued, frustrated with real life concerns, or stressing a great deal about "not messing up" in today's rehearsal. A brief general talk was had about attempting to protect themselves from unnecessary outside pressures. I encouraged them to work hard and focus on their homework and other obligations during off-days to better enable them to preserve their souls and spirits for the requirements of acting. I reiterated a common theme of mine as well, which is to "work" outside of rehearsals on their roles but not to "try" when in rehearsal. Blocking rehearsals are a bit of an exception, but once they are off-book they should attempt to stand back and give their work a chance to come to life within the rehearsal; they shouldn't put forward effort in an attempt to push their characters out, but rather enter with an appropriate energy, consider their given circumstances, and see what happens.

Rehearsal started with character massages wherein characters were paired and, for two minutes each, one actor would massage while the other monologued stories about how they first met, what they think will happen in the future between them, and any fears or desires they have. This was followed by thirty seconds of dialogue where they were allowed to ask each other questions in character about what they'd just heard. We did this exercise for two separate pairings. Actors were then told that, within the scenes, they

should/could attempt to use the knowledge they'd gained to help them pursue their objectives. The pairings were mostly very effective, but some characters were paired who share very little interaction in the text; these conversations were the most entertaining and perhaps the most valuable for the actors who learn, less about the relationship, much more about how their character might feel when confronted with the other. Characters who already have well-defined relationships added background stories and stated more clearly their character's secret hopes and fears about the other.

We then ran first half of Act Two off book three or four times, clarifying blocking and adjusting moments. Drastic improvements were visible in comparison to the previous days work on these sections. The actors seem to both do the original blocking better and make stronger choices when told that they are expected to have a 'surprise' in every entrance and that they are allowed to break the blocking. By the third run, actors had lowered their filters and were able to flow within the scenes. Some very beautiful moments resulted. We've done a good job of not locking into specific, repeatable moments, but rather at launching each scene with the proper energy and 'improvising' through it, allowing for a sense of gleeful spontaneity and emotional danger. The actor playing Dylan is an excellent leader in establishing this atmosphere, setting the bar high in the way he works very hard on arriving at rehearsal prepared and memorized, making strong, in-the-moment choices, taking notes well, and investing himself honestly into his character (or as we talked about in rehearsal, pulling his character over to his personal truths).

Friday, September 10, 2010

Before rehearsals began, I tried to consider why I was having so much success with the actors in comparison to normal university productions and arrived at this conclusion: I was controlling expectations. I was letting the actors know where they should be in their process; that at times it was inappropriate to strive for the end goal and at others it was inappropriate to simply mark time doing the text and blocking. I gave them an attitudinal shift toward their process that allowed them to embrace mistakes and made a mistake out of attempting perfection. We've done away with the false notions of trying to be good, to control performance, or to do it right. Instead, we've embraced the fact that the process is just that, a process. They are expected to go through a process that entails learning, absorbing, and thinking at the beginning, exploration, mistakes, and accidental success in the middle, and courageous choices, emotional openness, and the loss of self in service of the play/character toward the end. We are currently, somewhat accidentally, being pulled into the final step of the process in the final repetition of each memorized scene. The play is starting to happen to them and taking them for a ride, rather than their tiresome efforts to try to push the weight of the play into existence. They are accepting each moment as it happens, built upon the next, and without hesitation. Fear pushes them to shore up weaknesses with old habits that lead them in the opposite direction; I'm attempting to redirect that fear by redefining their weaknesses.

Today we blocked the large three-way scene culminating in Dylan's death by alcohol. The music department (without asking) took my Brinnin for the first forty-five

minutes of rehearsal. We attempted to work on another scene for a while, but I eventually caved and blocked the scene without the actor. Once the usual sense of work and progress in rehearsals was destroyed, I sent my stage manager to go retrieve the captured actor. I felt sorry for his predicament but got right to work when he returned. Blocking commenced, but the day was all but ruined. I was frustrated with how the actors playing smaller parts were totally phoning in their performance when not speaking and screwing up their small amount of lines. The weekend was strongly upon us. It's a good thing this was one of the smallest work-load days on the schedule. We're in a good place, but today's attitudes and performance cannot be repeated.

Sunday, September 12, 2010

Today we blocked the remaining scenes at the end of the play. We are now all blocked! I am growing weary of having tired actors. It's not all of them all of the time, but it's been a long time since all of the actors appeared to be at full strength. Warm-up tactics and other exercises have helped on occasion, but we mostly use the first blocking or off-book run as a warm-up. This is allowable when we're plowing through with such progress, but soon we will be off book completely. I won't want to be waiting around for them to get geared up when the only thing left to improve upon is their tired performance.

Monday, September 13, 2010

Today we ran the final scenes off book for the first time. Dylan was very tired, but he did well in the last two runs when privately confronted with it. He's confessed to not

sleeping well, likely as a result of stress from the largeness of the role. He is also becoming ill. For the rest of the cast, I am confronted with the differences in talent and experience. Where some actors can be told a note and major steps are taken in the right direction, other actors will be unable to incorporate even very specific notes into their performance, or will neglect a note given repeatedly after three or four runs. Blocking some actors to move at specific moments to specific locations, which is very important in tight blocking situations with great emotional investment coming from their fellow actors, also proves irregular at best. It is a failure on the part of the actors playing supporting roles to realize the importance of their precision; if they are sloppy, the focus and tension surrounding the central characters is sloppy.

I've been dealing with a casting dilemma over the past week. The actor playing Mattock had fallen very ill and missed Act Two rehearsals. Mattock is almost exclusively in Act One, and the production has suffered very little. He was due to be back today, but this morning he fell ill again and will be out for an undermined amount of time. It appears that until the doctors are able to figure out how to deal with his current situation, that he may fall ill again at any moment, and it must be considered that he may even be unable to finish a show once started. An understudy is likely the minimum necessity in this unfortunate situation.

Tuesday, September 14, 2010

Today we did a read-thru of the text, but changed the roles each actor was reading. Before we began I also did a check-in with the cast regarding their health and

fatigue level. I'd brought them some freshly squeezed orange and grapefruit juice and talked about the need to stay healthy in order to be able to grow into their roles. I encouraged them to defend their personal time and put in productive work on *Dylan*.

Then, I threw them a curveball. They would not be reading their own roles. I explained my dislike for read-thru's as a form of premature or strangely stifled performance that can educate a cast of actors not to repeat good decisions that didn't work in a read-thru environment, or to repeat a performance that only worked in such a format. The real benefit of such a reading, I put forward, was to re-hear the role as it comes from the page once you've already memorized it and gotten a sense of the blocking. Readings can also help one to better appreciate or understand the role of another. And so they were each assigned the roles of their most complimentary characters, rather than their own. Gender issues were ignored. I encouraged them to listen to their own parts to see if they hear any new lines that may have previously been rushed over, and to commit to their own roles as if they had been cast in it.

The reading was a marked success. Actors discussed how, after putting so much work into their own roles, they were surprised at how a more simple reading of their own lines worked. They were surprised at the amount of humor in the text. They were also surprised at some of the feelings they experienced as a result of playing their new roles.

Finally, after discussing it with my faculty advisor, I contacted another actor to understudy my ailing actor. Schedules are being considered. I hope to see the ailing actor tomorrow. I talked with him on the phone, and he seems in good spirits. It is my hope and

belief that he will be able to continue playing his role, but a backup is necessary due to the unpredictable nature of his current health.

Wednesday, September 15, 2010

Today we had a rehearsal without Dylan. The level of professionalism dropped dramatically. We took a step back on line memorization as well. However, some of the anxious feelings simply come from the fact that we worked the most difficult scenes for the play's weakest actors. Great steps were taken in this regard, with the actors making major adjustments such as slowing down, attempting much more positive tactics for their characters, and hitting the numerous beats in the script that had previously been blown-over. I think the cast now understands the style of the text a bit better. It was good they've had a chance to put into the play the work they'd done the day before. We kept things simple, but pointed out numerous acting beats to hit rather than attack the transitions in huge phrases, waiting for Dylan to return.

Thursday, September 16, 2010

Today we have our first complete run of the show. Some of the designers were be in attendance. The actors were trying hard just to get through the play. There were line problems, and their extreme effort wore out their audience. While there were good moments, the muddling of blocking and line dropping were more present than I would have preferred. Still, I think this caps a lot of work, solidifies it, and lets us build.

It is difficult to glean too much from such a performance, but I think in general I'll need to make a few larger adjustments to the performances of Meg and Brinnin who are taking my 'just be yourself' note too literally on stage, causing them to appear too young and not fully invested in their scenes. Still, the process to get them to this point has provided a lot more great moments that we will keep after the adjustment.

I am worried about how the scenic elements will switch silently behind the curtain during transitions. Otherwise, I was pleased at the relative smoothness of the other transitions.

In general, I've become more comfortable (resolved?) in the idea that Dylan and Caitlyn need to sound like they're from the same basic world: a U.K. sound with a bit of Irish musicality. If Dylan comes in strongly Welsh and Caitlyn is overly Irish, I fear they'll sound like they're both butchering different versions of the same accent. Keeping their sound paired more than the historical facts present seems wise in these circumstances. It sounds like Gage may be hurting his voice in some of his louder, yelling scenes. I've worked with him just a touch, but it will be good to have their vocal coach's input on that as well.

Friday, September 17th, 2010

Fight choreography took twice as long as I'd planned for, though the fight choreographer was extremely efficient and an excellent communicator. As a large portion of the cast had been sitting idly for an hour, I was worried this would be a wasted rehearsal day. It was a Friday, and they'd been pushed hard the day before. We had lost

our set for the day in preparation of light hang over the weekend, so I elected to use the free floor space and do a yoga warm-up. I'd not planned on doing forty minutes of work, but the cast was not at all warm and they seemed to be connecting/bonding as a group during the workout with some cast members even staying beyond their call in order to keep doing yoga work.

Their newly warmed and worked-over bodies were more able to be adjusted to work on both physical ticks vocal blockages that some of the actors carry with them constantly. I think the actors were better able to understand the concept of allowing themselves to become vessels for their characters hopes, desires, fears, and tensions (having just removed a great amount of their personal tensions). I talked about the importance of an open body in order to have an open mind and open emotions. I described the effortless manner in which the text, when flowing through you, can take you up and use your body in performance rather than the actor laboring to try to bring the thoughts and emotions to life on stage. There was a new kind of tension in rehearsal as many of the actors were in unfamiliar territory: open and exposed emotionally, attempting different physical and vocal positions, and experiencing a loss of text as they started to really act. They found that while their minds knew the words, their bodies did not.

At the end of rehearsal, I was told that this was the favorite rehearsal some of the actors had ever had in any show. Later, I was also told that some of the actors found the workout very therapeutic after they'd gone home to a safe space where they could cry out some of the stresses they'd been carrying around.

Sunday, September 19, 2010

Today we rehearsed upstairs in room 301 as the lighting team was finishing their hang. We continued to focus on body and voice, doing half an hour of yoga at the start with the principle actors. Some of the scenes remained shaky and flow was definitely disrupted as I cleaned blocking, pointed out moments where the actors weren't making choices, and generally pushed the scenes into a level beyond their initial comfort zone. I have every confidence that they will be able to grow into the new shape of each scene with the time remaining.

A more difficult political situation grew when the supporting actors entered the rehearsal. They had not had the benefit of the principles' warm-up, did not know their lines adequately, and had less focus in their execution of blocking. The positive energy of the rehearsal remained, but we were forced to stop and reset repeatedly as the supporting actors would either blow cues or miss blocking. Still, the leadership of the principles remained strong and the scenes progressed by using extremely moment-to-moment blocking with multiple runs and precision notes. I believe some of the actors playing supporting roles have been shrugging off outside work on their roles thus far. I don't believe they will allow themselves to be such a tempo and energy drag on scenes in the future, though at least a portion of the struggles is due to the extreme differences in talent between performers.

One specific moment occurs at the end of the play. I've elected to modify the ending of the play and keep Dylan on the scene "in spirit". Once the Ship Officer exits

the scene, Dylan turns and begins to finish his 'Do Not Go Gentle' poem as Caitlin says her final goodbyes. The actor playing the Ship Officer had a great deal of difficulty executing the initial blocking for his entrance in the proper tempo and reverence. Later in the scene, as a great deal of emotional magic is occurring, the actor speaks the first line of Dylan Thomas' poetry. The actor seems to have not yet gained the ability to tell the difference between what is going on outside, in relationship to the feelings inside his own mind and body, as after six or seven runs with repeated notes, the line delivery still resembled a Gatling gun shattering the energy of the precious scene. After a great deal of focus, we were able to get the performance to a near-acceptable level, though the problems of work-ethic, lack of commitment to the scene (giggling) and consistency from moment to moment were further exposed. I remain concerned at the inconsistency and apparent lack of commitment from the actor but hope that my message that such behavior has been noticed was well understood.

In the end, the rehearsal made me proud of my principle actors and very sympathetic and defensive to the position their supporting actors put them in with such careless performances. Focusing more on the moment-to-moment tactics and obstacles of the supporting actors may be the best way to help the performance of the principle actors.

Monday, September 20, 2010

We worked Act One today. Although we've been doing warm-ups together, the actors again appeared tired and pacing was off. Perhaps they are just not used to this workload. Perhaps they are overwhelmed by other studies. There were some nice

character changes and moment to moment discoveries. Things are headed in the right direction.

I've been breaking down Annabelle's role lately to help her gain variety and clarity in her role. I believe she will be fine. One moment that worked particularly well was, in order to get her to use her text better and change her delivery from beat to beat, I told her to perform one of her beats as a sexy ghost story. Other notes using adjectives about how to treat the text had resulted in very little change, nervousness from the actress, and frustration amongst the rest of the cast. The sexy ghost story unit worked perfectly! I'll have her define the rest of her beats as well using descriptive terms like this.

Will Bennett has agreed to be the understudy for the role of Mattock. We will work him into a rehearsal next week once he has been given a script.

Tuesday, September 21, 2010

There are some significant elements that I've not yet discussed in these journals. The performance space has dramatically affected the design and performance style of the text. By placing the "curtain" scenes behind a false proscenium, we have found the performance works best slightly heightened and pushed out in a vaudevillian sense. The scenes taking place in the middle of the floor need to incorporate the audience into the world of the characters, and many of these scenes do include audiences in the source text. The scenes on the staircase are best played closer to normal fourth wall realism. Rather than get into lengthy discussions with the actors over the language of performance style,

ripe with denotative and connotative difficulties, I am simply shaping individual moments in performance when needed.

Also, I have had to do very little in the way of directing the actor playing Dylan concerning my primary concept of ontological movement. The actor understands the leaps into poetic truth, ably grounds moments with physical detail, and finds a way to shape it so that the audience flows from each moment naturally. The style shifts are also led by Dylan as the actor masterfully raises and lowers the fourth wall, jumps into vaudeville, relaxes into realism, and assaults with confident Brechtian exhibitionism. My years spent working with this actor are benefiting the play greatly.

Wednesday, September 22, 2010

Early this morning I arrived at school to see the actor playing Dylan already at school and working on his lines. He was an emotional wreck having met with the dialect coach for the first time the previous day. The actor felt as though he would have to work a great deal to academically and precisely learn the new dialect. He felt the need to relearn the entirety of his lines with the new dialect in mind. In attempting the dialect for me that morning, he found his voice moving all around the globe, from New Zealand to Cockney.

Together, we were able to come to an understanding on how he would approach the dialect notes. To liberate his mind, I had the actor attempt his lines in a cheesy American Southern dialect, which he did easily. I then compared the ease of this change with what I'd hoped he'd be able to do with the new dialect; he should learn some

adjustments to his current approach, improvise with them until they felt comfortable, and then begin applying them to the text of the play. He should not treat each line of the play as a kind of new math problem to be solved. I reminded him the truth supporting his current dialect choice, that Dylan and Caitlyn were, in fact, from different regions and had a different sound. I asked him to attempt, in his dialect explorations, to primarily use the dialect notes to inspire more musicality in his voice (achieving some additional vocal variation that I had been pushing for anyway), and to allow him to notice new words that had otherwise gone un-noticed (exploring more tactic changes in the middle of lines). The actor seemed relieved and said he would take this discussion into the meeting he had scheduled with the dialect coach later that day.

The actress playing Caitlin felt no such stresses as she was easily doing an adequate Irish accent and had only some supporting materials and tips provided to her to aid her efforts.

Later, when I ran into the actor playing Dylan, I saw a much more confident actor who was eager to put into practice the things he had been learning.

Today in rehearsal we choreographed the Miss Wonderland dance. The actress had expressed interest in doing the initial choreography herself, and came with some good ideas. I learned of her further interest in tap dancing and elected to work some of that into her routine as well. We had a lot of fun, simplified, explored, and have something that is a collaboration using historical videos, the skills of the dancer, and my desires for the scene. At the end of rehearsal, I had yet to see her do the performance full-

out, but the structure was there. I will give her time to get comfortable and gain ownership.

Next, fight director Ian Borden returned and worked with the actors for another hour and a half, focusing exclusively on the act two brawl. The actors progressed well under Ian's direction. I was able to shape the scene more than before to have the correct tone and energy. Another meeting is required, but the fight is well on its way.

Finally, Caitlin and Dylan worked on the first scene of the play. This scene has received some attention, but is a monster twenty minute scene at the top of the play and featuring only the two actors. It sets up a great deal for the rest of the play, and therefore must be clear, intriguing, compelling, and focused. I must credit dialect coach Stan Brown with having saved me a lot of work on this scene. In his work with the actors on dialect, he helped them to focus on using each word differently, allowing lines to have multiple energies instead of one or two sentences carrying the same tactic. I helped the actors identify more units and beat shifts, take stronger choices, and explore moments where comprehension seemed to drop out, but the bulk of the improvements happened on their own. The hot danger of the dialect seemed to have cooled. It was a great way to end the day. I feel more confident about the course of this production than any other point in the future.

Thursday, September 23, 2010

We did a full run of the show. This hadn't happened since last week, so it was good to put them through the paces. All week we'd been working on getting the actors,

themselves, from inserting their presence into the scenes, which results in actor ticks, over-acting, and a slower pace as a result of additional beats being put before, inside, and after lines. Despite success in this direction all week, the actors chose to view the full run as something different from rehearsal; it was a chance to 'really feel' the show. After talking with a lot of experienced actors, I am told that this is a common mistake amongst young actors. We'll do a speed-through tomorrow to eliminate beats.

Friday, September 24, 2010

We did another fight call with Ian Borden, shaping and refining the fights. Things are looking better all the time. We also worked Will Bennett into the main bar scene so that he can be a backup for our Mattock if needed. We then did a speed through of the show, stopping half-way through Act Two when we ran out of time. I did a little soap box speech about what to expect to feel when we're doing something like this in their minds and bodies. I used the drum sticks to keep pace up and would occasionally make them restart sections where they were putting beats in before their lines. When we ended, the cast was joyous as having found the show. However, when talking to Dylan he revealed that he felt much as I had recently when acting; the slow show felt better to him. I will try to focus his mind on the play happening around him rather than the one happening within in future rehearsals. It is fortunate that I had the recent acting experience I acquired a few months ago. I would be otherwise unable to understand the minds of my actors as they attempt to put together the best show of their young careers.

Sunday, September 26, 2010

Today we didn't have the rehearsal space to accommodate lighting. We also were unable to rehearse on the third floor to accommodate the student-run Theatrix production, so we ended up on the Howell stage with the door to the studio (and all of its tech activities) open. It worked out better than I'd thought, as there wasn't anyone in the studio for the better part of our rehearsal.

The only actors called were Dylan and Caitlin. We used the opportunity to discuss in detail their relationship and to work through the first scene, identifying and refining further beats while keeping tempo. The rehearsal was largely to target the pacing and phrasing of the scene, to divide it into beats that would allow Caitlin to occasionally become the aggressor. A great discussion commenced on the nature of their relationship. The largest difficulty was in the limited life experience of the two young actors. Their understanding of love, wooing, charisma, co-dependence, children, marriage, and the aging process were, of course, limited. While they had pieced together a logical framework to justify the behavior of their characters throughout the arc of the play, their reasoning was that of youth. The resulting performance foreshadowed the ending, lacked depth, was defensive, and flattened the scene. They were making it too easy, and they were violating a cardinal rule of the theatre: they were not choosing true love.

My actors were extraordinarily researched, having read much of the biographies on the real life people their characters were based upon. These biographies were written after the break-up and demise of Dylan. They contained a measured and defensive tone in regards to the relationship between Caitlin and Dylan that was leaking into their

performance. My actors were performing just as the authors of Dylan's biographies wrote the relationship, already knowing the result of Dylan and Caitlin's relationship. We began the process of correcting the course of this scene and made progress in several large areas.

I then worked with Dylan on his *Do Not Go Gentle* poetry reading at the top of the play, exploring different attacks and given circumstances. As this moment is not written in Sidney Michael's text, I am treating it as a prologue, a chance for the audience to get a flavor of the Dylan Thomas the original Broadway audience would have known from attending the readings of his poetry.

Tuesday, September 28, 2010

Today we did a run of the show, but we were unable to finish as even a small amount of work within any scene eats up more time than we have available in one rehearsal. Still, the larger scenes in Act One are in need of some cleaning and attention. I'm glad I touched up a few moments. Act Two will soon be in need of tightening, but mostly in terms of pacing in the smaller two character scenes. We enjoyed a banister for the first time in rehearsal. The cast was able to keep most of the pace of the Friday speed-through without as much effort. Helping them ease into the performance while we add additional technical elements is largely all that remains.

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

Today we ran Act Two. My actors were ill. In fact, the day started with my rescuing the actor playing Dylan from his apartment. When I arrived, he was a puking mess. I cannot expect a lot from him today and will focus on places other actors to help drive the scenes. It is likely too many scenes are being pushed by Dylan as it is.

Technical blocking elements were fixed as well as refining timing on entrances and exits, but the joy was gone from them. This was a valuable rehearsal for them to learn what a performance will be like when they are tired, as certainly one will come. Improvements began when I started communicating to them to find the joy in each scene. It interrupted the show in terms of finding out the uninterrupted time of Act Two, but was needed to save the night. We ran over small parts a couple of times that needed work. Tempo did not fall off despite their illness.

Lastly, my actor playing Mattock became ill during rehearsal. He did not go home, but is on a day-to-day basis attempting to stay out of the hospital. His back-up is called for tomorrow's rehearsal.

Thursday, September 30, 2010

We did a full show run with limited interruptions on my part today. Act One was a little slower than its best run, so I gave a little soap box speech before Act Two encouraging the actors to make more engaging choices, to not hold on to control so tightly, to relax, and to have fun! Act Two showed some new performance moments that have never occurred before. Many of the actors finally made strong choices that freed

them to find an engagement in the scene that was thrilling for them as well as the audience. I'm excited to see further progression. Most of my notes were of the cleaning and clarification variety. Largely, these young actors need encouragement, comfort, and guidance in this last week before tech (and as tech elements are already being incorporated). They're getting more positive notes from me than usual as well as some more prescriptive notes to help push them over some of the hurdles they've been unable to address with their own efforts.

Rehearsal also ran a little long as the run ended with five minutes to spare and notes needed to be delivered. Tomorrow we'll be certain to warm up until 7:15, do fight call, and start right at 7:30pm. Today a combination of extended actor warm-ups met a failure to prepare technical elements, delaying the start of the run to 7:45, which was the difference in running overtime.

Friday, October 1, 2010

When asked about my opinions on the lobby display for *Dylan*, I responded that I would like them to try to take some inspiration from the poster design. Posting Dylan Thomas' writings up on the walls might be a good education and design premise: Do Not Go Gentle, In My Craft or Sullen Art, and Fern Hill are all read during the play. A biography could be helpful as well, however, I would prefer to focus on Dylan's words and not to have real life pictures of Dylan Thomas. Such imagery creates a focus on a historical visual reality that we're then obligated to recreate rather than having the truth of the play become the standard by which things are judged. It brings the problem of legitimacy, discussed earlier, into full view of the audience.

C. Design Process Journal

1.Scenic

Saturday, September 4th, 2010

After one week of rehearsal, I am currently experiencing an unexpected problem. I have requested a door be built into the set beside the stage left curtains to enable multiple and quicker exits on the stage left side of the set, provide the sound of a person exiting or entering, and provide a realistic piece of scenery to interact with in an otherwise difficult location. I am getting great resistance, not only from my scenic designer, but from their (and my) advisor. The response that “no one will be able to see it” is false, as one quarter of the audience will be able to see it when closed and three quarters when open. Furthermore, everyone in the audience will be able to hear the door opening and shutting. The scenic design team’s suggestion to “just play a sound effect” took me off guard, but I explained to them the importance of reality vs. ideals in my concept. If I needed the idea of a door, their idea would have been perfect, but I am looking to ground the actors in realism for brief moments using that part of the scenic design. I need a physical door. The idea of a door provided by a sound effect is the exact opposite of the aesthetic language from which we have been working.

Another difficult element that has now resolved centered around a rain special effect. At the top of the show, I’d requested a stage image wherein it rained on the Wales portion of the set, highlighting the weathered wood steps during preshow. I felt the rain provided a powerful and beautiful image, firmly grounding in the set (and the first twenty minutes of the play) in Wales. The rain was to repeat at the end of the play when Dylan’s

body was returned to Wales. The rain represents the essence of Dylan and his connection to his homeland. At first the scenic department seemed open to the idea when it was proposed in May, however no progress was made on its actualization. As the scenic design was being finalized, I made another push for rain and was strongly discouraged. The scenic department again suggested an alternative means to accomplish roughly the same look by using light, however a lighting effect depicting rain presents the audience with the “idea” of rain, inconsistent with the aesthetic language of the play. Discussion on the rain was tabled in the production meeting and a special meeting was set up to further investigate a rain effect. When I arrived at the special meeting, a temporary rain effect had been set up in a manner that would splash tiny droplets about eighteen inches into the audience. I could sense that I was in a hostile environment but pressed the technical team to move the effect away from the audience by eighteen inches. The effect worked. Multiple solutions were discussed on how to collect the dripping water, and a system was established that would continue to highlight the water as it dripped from the wood and onto a gutter system on the floor. Lighting design watched quietly but confessed when consulted that they would be able to design an effective look for this setup. A member of the Johnny Carson technical staff who was watching the setup volunteered some additional lighting treatments that they had experimented with to further accent the water dripping from the wood, and we adjourned our meeting with the rain effect in tact.

Tuesday, September 7, 2010

We had a production meeting today in which we were pressed to lock down the scenic design. A key door I'd been requesting continually from the scenic designer since August 18th (a little less than three weeks) had yet to make the groundplan. In the end the discussion came down to an interesting point- scenic usability/practicality over scenic beauty. As a great amount of my political capital was lost in the failed struggle to preserve the projection design, I attempted to clarify how the scenic designer could both preserve the look they were going for and still provide a door. Faculty mentors were dead set against the door, however, and did not listen to additional suggestions. While I am confident I could design an arrangement of curtains that hid the doorway and preserved the desired image whenever the curtain was closed, my ideas went the way of the (now disappointing) bar, bed, and projections. The door was cut.

I will now have actors making entrances and exits into closets to get towels, coats, etc. through a slit in the curtain. The suggestion to reveal the door from behind the curtain only in the scenes for which it is in play was never considered. The argument against the door was that it would be ugly, interrupting the curtain, and inconsistent with the rest of the set as there are no other doors. I feel they over-played their passion on the negative effects of the door, failed to understand the door's benefits. I now feel trapped to either use the curtain as a door or spoil the pacing of the scene. I've had other creative thoughts on ways to access the necessary props within the scenes, but they involve modifications to other parts of the set that will certainly be met with hostility. So much of this play

depends on the realistic access to and use of props, but the confines of the space have forced an aesthetic that runs counter to it.

Creative solutions respectful to the realistic demands of the play were never offered and have generally been treated with hostility when mentioned. I expect a designer to fight for the look of a play, but when confronted with a repeated request I feel they should attempt to innovate and incorporate rather than neglect and reject the idea. I am continually frustrated with the ingenuity of the production design team surrounding scenic issues, but as a part of the academic environment I am preserving myself and my relationships rather than press for the best results.

Sound, projection, and costume designs are moving forward as expected per our earlier discussions.

Thursday, September 16, 2010

I met with the scenic designer and props designer yesterday. I've been regularly asking for clarification on what the two hotel rooms will look like and have never received a rendering or anything resembling what the audience will see when watching the show. In this meeting, I attempted to assign those drawings again for Friday's meeting.

In the meeting, it was disclosed that the scenic designer had lowered the height of the White Horse bar six inches without telling me. It's likely a good change, but I was irritated that such changes could occur without my notification. Furthermore, construction on that bar is nearly complete, and I've never received a color rendering.

The color model has a bar in place, but one can hardly assess the color and detail on the

wood from such a tiny and rough cardboard model. I will live with whatever I get, mostly because I have been shut out of the design process.

We've also been having confusion between the departments because this university organizes its props and scenic departments unlike any I've ever seen before: the property designer will build the major scenic items interacted with in the bar and bedrooms. The property designer assumed, as I did, that scenic construction would be covering those elements. After some controversy over the construction of the bar, the property designer faced another surprise: they would be building (but not designing) the trick bed as well. As no bed designs had been passed to the property designer, the process has been (perhaps luckily) delayed in order to accomplish the trick entrance behind the bed to accommodate the costume quick-change. This was the point of our meeting, and the designs are to be in on Friday.

Monday, September 20, 2010

After meeting with the scenic designer on Friday, I conceded the realism look I had been going for in the hotel rooms after plain descriptions of what was desired were compared to what was offered. Rather than continue to tread water trying to have the designer attempt to fulfill the desired look, I attempted to operate in his realm. I was able to at least acquire two different looks (one for each hotel room), that would present the correct basic time of day and would not contain the bottles from the bar (as in realism, 1950's hotel room windows are not stocked with twenty bottles of alcohol.)

I also saw, for the first time, a rendering of a hotel room. I don't know which one it was supposed to be, and there was nothing but a bed and two bedside tables. No lamps, set dressing, colors, or background scenery were presented (which was intended to be the focus of the entire meeting). The 'trick bed' that allows Dylan to enter from behind only had the most rudimentary of drawings accomplished. It was nice that my efforts at last were granted enough respect that something was half-heartedly put down on paper.

Research was done on these hotel rooms early in the process, but once it was determined that the entire design for the bedrooms was thrown to the props department (as the bed, tables, all technically move during scene changes). I have no idea how well the non-design will transfer over to the props department assuming no more is drawn or developed. I can hope that conversations or decisions occur without me in the room, but I have little faith in the competency of anyone related to this bureaucratic mess.

I am completely unable to comprehend the technical faculty's ruling that all non-permanent scenic elements are the duty of the properties department. The number of contrary examples I can think of is too long to list. I enjoy the thought of putting the entire set on locking casters to relieve the scenic department of all duties.

Wednesday, September 22, 2010

Today I was called by my advisor who had my scenic director in her office, upset with our communication. After a discussion, we learned that both of us felt as though communications were moving around us rather than through us. He had given design instructions to his subordinates that I had not seen; I would check in with the shops to

monitor progress; I would give notes and respond to questions asked of me by the technical director and properties master; those notes would then be dutifully passed back up to the scenic designer without the two of us ever having discussed the matter in person. I felt this was an awkward, but best case arrangement when a designer doesn't (and won't) provide renderings on which to base preliminary discussions. However, after this meeting another solution was reached: we would take those walks together so that he could hear my comments on the work in progress.

One example of this strategy in effect is the construction of the trick bed through which Dylan enters unnoticed after performing a quick change. Seeing the bed for the first time, already constructed, I noted how short and narrow it was; the bed seems to be about four and a half feet long, and it's width will barely fit to snuggling actors on it. It is too late to adjust. We'll see just how comical or off-putting it is in rehearsal tomorrow. The main function of the bed, to allow the actor a secret entrance, was accomplished by using a back headboard entrance. The trick door that opens, however, is much too large to go unseen by the audience unless it is completely covered by pillows and blankets; it can't be any smaller and still allow the actor access. As a bed for two was a primary image I laid out in the beginning of the design process, I would have appreciated more attention be paid to this aspect of design. With little time left, we find ourselves in a situation where there is not room to store a full-sized luscious bed. The bed that we do have is at risk of appearing humorously short and certainly does not look luscious.

A much better solution would have been to put the trick door in the underside of the bed. The technical director assured me that this can still happen if the current

arrangement doesn't work. It won't. Far too many decisions are made far too late in this process and based on measurements that need not be permanent. Students lock in with certainty to unpredictable elements of the design process and make enormous sacrifices in other areas to keep these arbitrary elements. If the designer understood more about performance, the functionality of the scenic elements would be more primary.

I've also never seen any presentation of colors, textures, etc. for the lamps, bed sheets, tables, etc. in the hotel room. I also remain unconvinced that the back liquor cabinet structure will be capable of transforming adequately to present two different hotel room looks. Hotels do not have tens of bottles of glowing liqueur on the wall, and some sort of masking was proposed. Weeks continue to go by without my seeing something more firm. It is not from a lack of asking. The scenic advisor is aware.

However, at this point in the production I have little ability to change or move the scenic design. When questions are asked, very inadequate answers are given; pressing for further samples, examples, and drawings has never brought adequate results; to continue to press only hurts me politically. So long as I have a set on which I can move actors, I will play defensively by eliminating distracting details as they appear. I have been made unable to prevent them before they arrive.

I often wonder to what extent the student scenic designer's advisor is allowing them to fail for educational reasons, or if they have completely divorced themselves from this production. A basic rendering of key scenic looks is an essential thing I've been able to get from every other designer with whom I've ever worked.

In a meeting wherein I talked with the advisor, I was simply told that I must be more cautious about pressing the designers too hard and angering them. I was instructed to try to win over my designers with kindness to motivate them to do the work. From my point of view, the design faculty did not support requiring their student to finish the design if they did not wish to do so. This meeting occurred just after the final battle over the projection design, which I made the calculation to lose in order to preserve my remaining political capital. I have inserted myself a great deal less into the design process after that point. My strategy includes asking for status updates and waiting for designers to come to me with questions about the principles already put forward rather than try to help pave a path ahead of them. I have been reduced to more of a fact-checking resource than an artistic leader in this sense, passively reminding them of what had been requested by me, was required by the text, and was in the realm of our aesthetic. Side discussions happen occasionally, but we are more working alongside each other than with each other. Through my stage manager, I encounter needs in rehearsal. The designers isolate themselves and attempt to solve the matter completely before checking in, risking that their initial efforts might be modified or cut. Modification and cuts are allowed to be enormous insults to the ego and well-being of the process. It is undeniable that the design faculty has no interest in seeing certain elements of design carried through.

Friday, October 1st, 2010

Many elements are finally flying up around the false proscenium bar/bedroom area. I had already resigned myself to the fact that the hotel rooms would not look like

period hotel rooms in the style of realism. I'd fought to keep them from being portrayed in an abstract way, as Dylan was not abstractly arriving in New York or nearly ending his relationship with his wife in some vague idealistic way. The environment in both scenes needed to be grounded, textured, and location specific in order to anchor the audience in this point of Dylan's travels. Instead, I was told that we would be ordering plastic to cover and blur the bar's bottles into an opaque city window effect. I did not like the look. I did not like the research samples. That seemed not to matter as no other option would be put forward. Now, I'd merely hoped the resulting look would not be like a space age or drug inspired bedroom. Instead, I was told that the plastic material for the bedroom scenes was never ordered. I believe this was my technical director covering for the designer. At no point did I ever see a design drawing depicting these covers, their removal and reapplication, or a strategy to make the two rooms look as different as an expensive New York hotel room and a cheap Texas hotel room should be. These elements were discussed politely, publicly, and privately from the start. If I had been a professor, no credit would be given after such a mistake. If the design faculty had given me the support proper to any director, the decision would not have been made to let it occur.

As an alternative, the design faculty member offered to throw up massive amounts of black fabric over the bottles. It looked as terrible as it was intended. I inquired as to whether they had a method of smoothly removing it in scene transitions. They did not. I inquired as to whether they had a solution to put it back on later for the second hotel room scene. They did not. It was insulting. The design faculty member had also

previously fought my request for a doorway in this area of the stage, claiming it was an eyesore. When I insisted that the functionality of the doorway was worth downgrading the image, I was then told a clear lie: it was physically impossible to put a door there because of the limitations of the space.

2. Lighting

Tuesday, September 7, 2010

Today's meeting with the lighting designer was beneficial. We were largely on the same page, sharing information about the location of lights and actors and viewing sample images. The lighting design must shift dramatically from one location and theatrical style to the next, and the designer has a good handle on each one.

Thursday, September 16, 2010

I don't have specific things to comment on lighting at this time. Light hang is this weekend. However, all discussions have been positive and all image research seems to be on the right track.

Monday, September 20, 2010

Light hang was this past weekend. It will be nice to see some looks soon. My lighting designer looks like it is perpetually four in the morning. The buzz from this area of design is one of quiet excitement, confidence, and support at a fairly overwhelming task.

As I cover the entire theatrical space with action that occurs during multiple times of day, this is not an easy show to light.

Thursday, September 23, 2010

There are massive amounts of lights in the air, but it makes sense as this play has a lot of scenes with a lot of locations and a lot of special/spiritual moments. There is a special effect gobo that I was shown that may play nicely with the projections. However, at this time it is difficult to say how things in the air will translate to looks on the ground. In rehearsal, lighting was attempting to build some cues during the run. Things looked awful. I have to assume that there were other factors going on.

Friday, October 1, 2010

Yesterday we did a Paper Tech of the show. The process lasted three hours and reminded me of just how challenging this show will be for the stage manager to keep pace, the lighting designer to follow properly, and the need for quality sound support. I was unsure as to whether the lighting designer had as many internal cues as his high call numbers suggested (into the 300's), but also hoped that he did; there were a lot of places in the text where dramatic shifts in stage location have been blocked that did not prompt a cue. I am certain that the lighting designer is in over his head, but he's making up for his lack of efficiency and experience with hard work; the poor chap is starting to look a bit like Disney's Droopy Dog cartoon character.

3. Costume

Saturday, September 11, 2010

In this week's meetings with the costume designer, we've started pulling and fitting costumes on the four major characters. I was able to witness some of Meg's costume fitting and am very pleased with the direction things are taking. I've got a slight concern that there won't be enough color, as the earth tones of Wales and the industrial tones of formal New York don't have a lot of flare or flash. At the same time, I've not seen the costumes from the most colorful scenes quite yet, as they continue to pull for more characters and scenes.

Tuesday, September 14, 2010

Today I saw dress designs for all three major women in the Anton's home. I was surprised to be selecting a red colored fabric for Caitlin once presented with it where, previously, I'd preferred the idea of the green. However, when placed alongside the other colors of dresses being used in the scene, the red was the direction in which to head. I have been told a costume design for Miss Wonderland is forthcoming; so long as it's in the right ballpark and includes a boa, I will be happy. I will see other costumes tomorrow.

Thursday, September 16, 2010

I've been attending costume fittings a little bit, but have otherwise stopped in on the costume shop every few days. Costumes look really good, however I'm afraid there

might be too much texture and brown so as to muddy the difference between New York and Dylan. We briefly discussed this, and I was reassured that Dylan will be given appropriate contrast in his big city environment.

Monday, September 20, 2010

I stopped into the costume shop today. Costumes are progressing well. I won't know much more until I see the costumes that are being built and see the pulled costumes on the bodies of the actors.

Sunday, October 3, 2010

I've not written a lot about costumes as they've progressed exactly as planned. It was fun to see the Miss Wonderland costume develop. The dresses for the ballroom scene are great. The costume changes are the biggest problem, but it's not something that's in my hands. We'll refine and trim down the changes until they're doable.

4. Sound

Saturday, September 11, 2010

I met with the Sound Designer today. We talked for about three hours covering speaker placement and specific cues. I have now gotten rid of most all of my most initial sound design thoughts in favor of a more supportive, simple, less forward sound-design in almost every case. Jeff does a great job at incorporating sound suggestions or descriptions and building upon them. Jeff has re-arranged the speakers in the

performance space, an act that will dramatically increase the sound capabilities of the space. especially in comparison to the extreme four-corner default placement. Jeff has bifurcated the space in the same manner as the alley staging so that all audience members experience the same soundscape from front to back and left to right. The current design involves front speakers in the middle of the space, rear speakers against the four walls allowing for more directional supportive surround-sound, and toppers hung above the audience's head enabling surround pans and directional sound. Massive subwoofers are also hung above in the grid and will be utilized for the first time in the space.

Saturday, October 2, 2010

At Dry Tech I heard some amazing sounds. They gave me a lot of confidence about the ending moment. It's a complicated final set of cues and so this was the first my ears heard what had previously only been described in words. It was better than I'd thought it could be.

5. Projections

Saturday, September 11, 2010

I will journal on this topic starting at the point at which I gave up the title of projections designer.

The projections designer has showed me some clips of which I approve. The difficult task will now be in placing the projections within the space. The scenic design has not given

us any of our requests and little remains but dark floor surfaces. We also have no idea about the capabilities of the machines doing the projecting. I have encouraged the designer to speak with the Sound Designer as he has a lot of experience in this field.

Wednesday, September 15, 2010

Today I met with the projections designer and was convinced to move the projections to the flat surfaces of the set. While I would prefer to have a locked projection design, the inexperience of the design team, and my failure to fight for their empowerment, has left them with a 'please fit us in' plea. However, the enthusiasm of the designer is encouraging, showing me for the first time, the statistical information I'd requested this past summer as well as mock-ups of what projections would look like in the space based on that information. I am concerned that the painted wood grain of the set will not allow for a clear image of water on the top of the set, which is our first priority. I am less concerned about our second priority, which is a star effect to be used in combination with the lighting designer. It will be interesting to see how much access the projection design team will be able to access the space to refine their design.

D. Dry Tech- All Areas

Saturday, October 2, 2010

We met for four hours, plowing through different lighting looks before sound arrived. In general lighting was doing okay. They were encouraged to use the cyclorama more often, to change a couple of scenes to interior daytime rather than exterior night (an

understandable miscommunication), and to work more on the look of the preshow/first scene. Sound was quite amazing in the space. We talked about changing a few minor cues, extending others, and communicating about what was to happen with the remaining cues that failed to execute correctly in their three dimensional movement within the space.

E. Wet Tech- All Areas

Sunday, October 3, 2010

The day started relatively on schedule, training the board operators and introducing the run crews to the basics of the show. I was a bit concerned about the apparent lack of lists and organization on the costume and prop run crews. As the costumes weren't scheduled to run, they were less of a concern. During the run, I instructed actors not to move props to 'help' the crew in moments that they weren't going to be able to do during every run of the show.

Once the cue to cue began, I would bounce around from designer to designer whispering notes. The cue run lasted longer than I'd expected, because the lighting designer also used it to adjust cues. Lighting design required a lot of refining, additional cueing, and some total color changes, but generally met the tone requirements of each scene with adequate lighting on the actors faces. Sound design was quite amazing in its potential but actually contained more problems to adjust than lighting; these problems were quickly and adeptly handled. Projection design, on the other hand, suffered a great many problems. Their projections were not yet fully rendered, integrated with the cueing

program, or precisely timed. Projections also suffered in their incorporation into the space, adjusting projector angles and resolutions during the run. The inability to turn off the projectors was also overlooked by the producer (I was told this is a constant problem at this university in every attempt to use projectors. It seems projector specific shutters cost \$500 each and are not purchased generally.) As a result, we are unable to have a true blackout at any point in the show: stars are slightly washed out; it produces a strange glow with a hard television edge; it illuminates the most powerful part of the set whether we want focus there or not. The scenic design was unfinished in parts, lacked some key masking, and needed refining in other areas. Without the technical director present, there wasn't much to be done about those issues.

We were half way through the second act by the mid-day meal break and resumed after our meal. Cast spirits were high, appreciating the sound and lighting elements without getting bogged down by the repetitions and slow pace. After finishing the cue to cue, the cast attempted to wear and change costumes during a run. It was nice to see them, though some major transition issues are giving me some concern.

The actors actually grew in performance on the night run of the show, which ended halfway through the second act. I am really looking forward to everyone reaching a certain comfort level with the new technical elements.

F. Dress Rehearsal

Monday, October 4, 2010

Dress Rehearsal #1

Major problems with costume changes stopped the production twice. I believe we have solutions for all of problems, though at least one of the difficulties was a result of a crew member not at their proper post. It seems that anything new will be a problem on its first attempt. Every element that was changed or fixed hit a snag and some entrances were late for which I know no cause. I think the cast and crew are tired and not as focused as they should be after yesterday. Acting also took a step back from yesterday. It's almost as if last night produced the opening night high and tonight was a second show slump.

Dress Rehearsal #2

Tuesday, October 5, 2010

We did a run, and then ran the last part of show twice. The actors were back in shape, on pace, and making exciting choices. Major problems with costume changes persisted in the two most troublesome spots. Adjustments will now be made as to what costumes are put on and not just practicing the quick change to improve efficiency. Sound has been getting better and better at levels and fixing cueing errors. Lighting has improved dead spots and timing cues. The show feels good so long as the costume changes can be improved.

G. Conclusion

The implementation of my concept has gone well in those places where creation has been allowed to occur. In places where the design team could not create within the parameters of the concept, the design elements were cut rather than allow for elements that worked against the aesthetic. In all cases the through-line of the play will be supported less than the amount I had desired, but it remain clear and intact. This is the mode in which the play currently resides; capable of having gone faster and progressed further but prevented from having gained that distance and momentum in the wrong direction. Similarly with the actors, many improvements could be made in an ideal environment wherein professionals of the proper age and experience level were selected instead of students.

As one actor differs from the next, I was careful to push each actor in the manner I thought would gain the most ground without pushing him or her off the mark or causing him or her to lose confidence. Some actors had a great deal of difficulty adhering to the precision necessary in a moment essential to the pacing and meaning of the play; these actors were forced to struggle with this aspect at the expense of other performance elements. Other actors, at times, lacked the confidence, life, and spirit necessary to fill their roles; these actors were defended by me, given broad notes, fed lots of positive reinforcement, and encouraged to engage in what felt like misbehavior on behalf of their character. Finally, another group of actors were simply too young for the demands of their roles, having no experience with the social restrictions of the era and second hand

(at best) experiences with marriage, love, fame, etc. A great deal of semantic searching occurred over words like love, power, charisma, sensual, seduction, strong, and mature.

Attempts to use substitution elements resulted in a flat, simplistic, and distancing in these particular actors' performance, so I elected to describe the key obstacles and desires of each scene as best I could and allow them to play the scene as authentically as they understood it rather than concern the young actor with the impossible task of gaining more life experience before the opening night curtain. A director can stretch an actor by a few degrees, but they cannot change the actor's climate. I am confident that no better cast existed at the university, and that in any cast of students, some will be stretched to find an appropriate personal connection and fail in this manner. The comparatively difficult progressions and nuances of consuming alcohol were much more closely understood.

IV. Research Narrative Area III: Post-Production

In this section I will reflect on the results of my work with the actors and designers. I will also reflect on the effect department policies, budgets, and communications had on the end product.

A. Reflection on the work of the actors from opening through closing night.

The opening night performance of *Dylan* evaded the technical disasters that haunted earlier runs and was reviewed warmly by first time theatre goers and veteran critics alike. I felt proud of my accomplishments, victories, and labors; I allowed the glory of good reviews to temporarily wash away those persistent faults I'd earlier bemoaned. I attended every performance of the run, which remained quite true to the work done in rehearsals. After the first week of performance, the gleam of opening night wore away exposing old failures, losses, and regrets; there were no surprises. There were only two instances where I spoke with the Stage Manager to ensure very specific blocking notes were adhered to; university students often fail to understand the potentially damaging effect of a seemingly slight detail such as sitting in a chair too soon during another's line. The other instance was to address an issue an actor began having as they attempted to solve, what they perceived to be, a technical problem in performance that they had never been addressed in rehearsal: they were told to let it alone. One must consider the arc of a student's education when considering a review in academia, lest we

point out that all fell short of the latest Tony Award winners and move on. For a university production, *Dylan* was an impressive success in all areas.

The successes with the actors were numerous. The actor's individual and collective performances reached a pinnacle heretofore unmet during the two years of my studies. As a whole, the ensemble was focused, committed, and specific in the attributes, obstacles, and objectives of their characters. Performances remained disciplined, yet fresh. New moments occurred between actors every night without altering the shape, pacing, or given circumstances of the scene as a whole. Actors prone to inconsistent performance were more than usually focused and contained by the rest of the ensemble. I have been encouraged to take some credit for the success of the actors. While a director can hope to inspire dynamic performances, they can only pare away to shape that which is given.

Many elements combined to ensure a thriving rehearsal culture. Late in the process tension built to a healthy breaking point as the cast realized the performance would have an unusually high bar of success. Fear that their individual performance might be called out as below this new, higher, standard generated a commitment level that could overcome the fatigue which usually breaks university students away from performance as they attempt to maintain health, sleep, course assignments, and work hours. The general feeling amongst the cast was that this performance might actually be special in some way: actors were still enjoying themselves, their success, and the performances of their peers. Each actor felt they were an essential and vibrant contributor to the arc of the play. Stern notes and confrontations defended and shaped that arc. The

cast's expectations were being met and exceeded; new expectations were formed. It would not be enough to show up and say their lines. The play was clean and any misstep would stick out. Whereas a good performance had been a desirable idea at the first rehearsal, they arrived at tech week with the tools to make it a reality. Although the entire cast was chosen with the calculation that they would contribute to this attitude, two actors in particular had the most overt effect on the tone and work ethic of their peers, reigning in strays and leading them to this positive breaking point: Gage Wallace (Dylan) and Patrick Zatloukal (Doctor, Ensemble). Due to their impressive dedication to memorizing the text outside of rehearsal and an especially open, committed, and positive attitude toward directorial notes and character exploration, the seeds of success were nurtured to harvest. I am supported in the included reviews and responses in saying, individually and collectively, the *Dylan* cast answered the call to give its audience (myself being the first audience member) a performance well above any standard for amateur performance the Midwest.

The remaining failures concerning the actors were largely a result of two elements: the actor's level of ability at the initiation of the rehearsal process, and the degree to which a shortcoming impacted my priority list as measured against the time required to solve the problem. Shoring up erratic performances in key moments to preserve structural points became a priority, however time consuming, to prevent the sudden derailment of the play's through-line. I would meticulously block transition sections, demanding repeated precision in both form and timing to support the flow of the play, the perceived motivations of the lead characters, and the general clarity of the

action. As a result, the follow-up on challenges made to young actors to attempt a deeper understanding and portrayal of the rich lives of their characters became words alone.

The time between the actors' ownership of their roles, and the period for which technical elements became the focus was too short to dive into sessions of deep discovery. Such attention would sacrificed the precision gained and risked the actors' confidence to so thoroughly give them the sense that their understanding of a human under those given circumstances was limited. While physical changes and restrictions were sometimes effective solvents, I felt it better to encourage the cast to feel their scenes passionately and pursue objectives as they felt them- not as a victim, but expecting to win. Occasionally, this resulted in moments or performances that could be described as overly youthful.

B. Reflection on the work of the design team from opening through closing night.

I had cautious confidence regarding the technical elements of *Dylan* on opening night. Long ago I had been forced to accept certain major truths about the technical elements: not all seats were created equally, the projections would be jumpy and flicker on and off, the projector light would never be extinguished, the brilliant sound design could stop the show in a computer glitch, a costume change was slow, the scene changes were being performed by apathetic students who were noisy, the curtain was loud, the bathtub was a black rubber hole, and no real set had ever been designed or built for the

two hotel rooms. Even with these internal memories in mind, the audience response to the set was overwhelmingly positive. No major event destroyed the play, allowing the excellent attributes of design to outshine its flaws. Design concepts were rooted in service of the text deeply enough and applied with enough flair as to distract audience members and provide counter-point to every flaw for the critics. After my aesthetic concepts were applied to the requirements of the text, the degree of success in each design area was the product of that particular designer's skill and the necessity to which their work needed to be confined to the aesthetic.

The successes in each design area were achieved under a variety of dynamics. Positive attributes of sound and scenic design were rooted firmly in conversations about my concept for the play. The script, and especially this script, spells out a list of requirements more for these two design elements over any other. I connected strongly with both designers, sharing numerous visions and sparks of creative inspiration. When it came time to apply our words into sound cues or drawings, there was a distinct change in the process. Whereas the sound designer was a faculty member capable of expanding upon our conversation by presenting multiple options within the agreed upon aesthetic, the scenic designer was a student designer who had difficulty moving the words we'd shared to the page. In the end, the method by which successful elements were created in both sound and scenic design came about by analyzing the list of requirements and talking conceptually about them. Costume and lighting design shared more elasticity when it came to the requirements of the text and were also able to exhibit more flexibility in their adherence to the aesthetic while remaining cohesive. While I had some specific

visions for dazzling moments in both costume and lighting design, the real strength of each design came from the designer's own abilities to provide a consistent and detailed product surrounding occasional moments of inspiration in support of the performance. The greatest attribute of the projection designer was to be flexible within the unfortunate confines in which they had been boxed. In general, each designer communicated to me that they were proud of the end product. I was proud to congratulate both student Scenic and Lighting designers on having their designs both nominated by the Region V Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

The failures in each design area were primarily a result of the educational system and processes. Students were told not to attempt design requests by instructors. They were not pushed to meet deadlines or bring additional material in support of the concept. They were allowed to challenge the concept late in the design process. The scenic designer was even allowed to completely refuse to design two entire scenes. While I attempted to resist the ever-sliding standards, I was not supported. I had suffered a defeat by over-reaching into a matter that I had no direct power to control. It was Waterloo of sorts, and I attempted to retain as much influence as possible in retreat. Without a producer to provide the stick in service of the production, the students chased the carrot of the renegade and indolent faculty in service of a lackadaisical production process.

It can be said that I failed to unify each member of the design team under my vision in spirit, but not in action. If a director cannot rely upon the ambition and vision of a designer, the relationship will fail. If he cannot coax, prod, politic, or supersede the designer due to personal and societal restrictions placed upon them both, the relationship

will fail. If the only means of cooperative creation is to cede the seat of aesthetic authority to create within the limitations and preferences of a designer or their superiors, the relationship will fail. However, in so much as this final semester represents a first step into a professional world wherein producers are present and supportive of the productions they oversee, the ends have justified the means. As each member of the design team was able to see the interaction of their design with the other elements, the tone changed dramatically: lights and sound played beautifully with projections around the set during transitions as costumes performed quick-changes and grounded the actors, scenery, and production in a believable performance. After the production's opening, each designer approached me wearing a large grin, eager to shake my hand. Our relationship was healthy and had been improved by our success. I cannot say the same for those mechanisms of the educational system through which we were forced to operate.

C. Reflection on the effect communication, budget and department policies had on the production.

In so much as the measure of any director may be in the success of their production when compared to others derived of a similar circumstance, *Dylan* was a smashing success. While I had anticipated many of the problems that were faced, I had not foreseen the degree to which they might occur. Hindsight can be said to be 20/20, however I feel one needs a much better vision to peer through the haze of political, personal, and financial motivations that played against individuals during this process. Had I felt being saccharin would have more effectively manipulated or motivated

personnel, I would have acted in such a manner. If yelling and intimidation would have prevailed, I could access that as well.

One must respect the individuals involved enough to suppose that on certain matters they cannot be moved by any force. Except in cases wherein it was conceded that the motivations for pursuing one design element over another was mere cost or ease of labor (at a time when both cost and time for labor were plentiful), one would also do well to assume that each member of the design team sought to present an ideal design in service of this particular theatrical production. All extended conflicts in the design process must either arise from a lack of respect for the director's position or vision through the stubborn insistence to an aesthetic ideal or from an ignorance that grows more willful over the progression of time.

In my final analysis, this production of *Dylan* was a success in process and product. The aesthetic and process battles were limited, necessary, and deemed beneficial in the end, even by many original detractors. No single design element, act of the producers, or absent effort was allowed to derail the fine work of the actors, who turned in an inspired performance. The purpose of educational theatre is not to turn youth into students, but to turn students into professionals. This production upheld a high standard by which performances and behaviors were aimed; for those who strove to achieve it, the standard was largely met.

V. Director's Reaction to Responses and Reviews to *Dylan*

In this section I will respond to the critiques of my faculty mentors. I will also respond to the reviews from publications on the performance. All referenced reviews and responses can be found in the Appendix of this thesis document.

A. Reaction to Faculty Responders

The faculty responders to this production were Professor Virginia Smith, Dr. Ian Borden, Dr. William Grange, and Professor Stan Brown. For the most part, I have little disagreement with the criticisms present in their responses.

While many complimented the fluidity of the scene changes, they could certainly have been handled more masterfully; a battle was fought and lost on this subject. Similarly, I am sympathetic to criticisms on the function and effect of the scenic design and the production's use of the space.

Many felt the play was too long; I am both saved and irritated by their conceit to the playwright's sacrosanct position. As academia worships the ancient texts it preserves, it also desires relevancy for modern audiences. For this production, I rejected the a priori criticism that a production lasting two and one half hours was too long. This production had a captive audience and did not seek to attract to the theatre new members likely to be frightened by such a run time. It sought to produce an effective theatrical experience to be enjoyed by those with any propensity to do so. I watched the production every night and neither felt it was too long, nor witnessed the usual amount of fidgeting and cellular phone use that is normally present at university productions. To further my point, a large

number of audience members can usually be expected not to return after an intermission, especially after a first act lasting one and one half hours. This was not the case. For a large portion of the captive audience any length was be too long; it would be foolish to make the cuts necessary to please them with this production.

Finally, a large number of responders desired changes, either in casting or in performance, of the role of Meg. While I agree the performance would have ideally been more mature, powerful, and nuanced, I do not believe there was a better portrayal available within the resources of the department. I do not, however, concede their instinct to have Dylan's relationship with Meg been more compelling and enjoyable. The desire to continually add lust and romance into all relationships can lead directors astray when the success of the relationship is not the purpose of the drama. Unless directors understand the function of a relationship within the central plot, they will divert the audience and be unable to properly deliver them to the climactic release. Audiences are often made to feel unsatisfied with a plot element in service of another. I will detail the reasoning behind my approach on Meg more thoroughly below.

B. Reaction to Publication Reviews

The publications *Lincoln Journal Star* and *Star City Blog* both posted favorable reviews of this production online. In addition, Journal Star contributor Jeff Korbelik later awarded an Honorable Mention to Gage Wallace's performance of Dylan Thomas in the category of "Top Five Individual Performances of the Year." (Korbelick) Both

publications particularly enjoyed a well-earned scene between Dylan and Brinnin wherein the two men share “a rare moment of sobriety when Dylan explicates the socialist/humanist reading of a nursery rhyme.” (Bucklin) Transitions between scenes, costumes, and scenic elements were mentioned in a positive light. Actor performances were mentioned as particularly strong, though the *Star City Blog* felt there were some moments where monologues “fell flat.” (Stewart).

I am proud of the actors’ performances and feel this assessment is fair. The actor playing Dylan is a strong stage presence with an open heart and terrific instincts guiding the use of his body and cutting the space with his fellow performers. His weakness, amplified by his poor health during the performance run, is clearly his voice, and this is most exposed during those moments alone where language was the primary mode of conveyance. Far from ruining the performance, this weakness was simply not up to the standards of the rest of his performance and could even be said to have superseded the strength of many cast members completely. The actor playing Brinnin saved many scenes through his excellent sense of tempo and dynamics, and was largely responsible for repairing the pacing of the production. I feel that both of the actors playing Dylan and Brinnin were well cast and filled their roles at a level far superior to the university norms.

In contrast to some faculty responses, the performance of Meg is viewed in a positive light by the publication reviews, described by the *Lincoln Journal Star* as “a somewhat guarded performance, which helps to point to her character’s ulterior motives and adds a sense of mystery and gravity to her portrayal.” (Bucklin) Considering the function of Meg in the play, I do not feel the term “guarded” to be critical in context.

Though a bit young, I personally feel the performance of Meg to be well crafted and appropriate to the arc of the play.

Meg is a conglomerate character of the playwright, acting in place of multiple women in Dylan Thomas' life. She is a foil to Caitlin's robust, dynamic, and passionate personality, providing Dylan with those things Caitlin cannot: a sense of restraint, control, and dignity. Furthermore, Meg is not structurally well suited or constructed for the audience to wish for their relationship to succeed. Instead, she is placed as "The Reward" just after "The Ordeal," or the moment the hero confronts death in the dramatic structure of *The Hero's Journey* as put forward by Christopher Vogler's text, *The Writer's Journey*. Meg functions as the "Reward" in Vogler's text. She is the energy or lesson that allows the hero safe passage on "The Road Back," which is represented by Dylan's return to writing. In Michaels' text, Dylan feels born again on this new path, stating "Oh, God, Meg, thank you! Thank you! I think I've got a hell of a chance." (pg. 81) The hero, Dylan, is then tested severely by his alcoholism at the penultimate act, or "The Resurrection," wherein Dylan is purified by a last sacrifice and experiences another death and rebirth, but on a higher level. With Vogler's text in mind, Meg and sobriety (The Reward) are both the cure and the poison to our self-identified drunken poet. Dylan must purify himself in a bath of alcohol, returning to his true nature even if it kills him. Sidney Michaels' text does not give us a lesson in the benefits of sobriety but asks us to forgive a man/ourselves for living as he/we was/were meant to live. Tragic though it may be, Sidney Michaels' text is a lesson of self-celebration and acceptance, the antithesis of Meg's capitalist message of reform and restraint. It is our cultural bias that clings to the

drudgery Michaels' presents in Meg over Dylan's unapologetic life of creation and celebration.

Meg's reserved relationship with Dylan plays perfectly into Dylan's final act. In the structure of the hero's journey, Vogler describes the hero's final act as the "Return with the Elixir" where the hero returns home bearing some element of the lesson learned by his Ordeal that can change the world. (Vogler) It is with alcohol that Dylan purifies himself of Meg's reserve and restraint and takes his tragic but poetic lesson of *carpe diem* home to the ethereal realm of his Dionysian poetry, stating, "I love you! But I'm alone! The rage of the world! Half-compromise, half lie? I'm coming home!" (pg. 86) Dylan is a man trapped between two ontological realms. In the end he is forced to choose one over the other.

If Meg had been the answer to Dylan's happiness, which is the structure of romantic comedies rather than tragedies or problem plays, we would have seen Dylan satisfied completely with her by his side. One can compare the anxious artist writing *Under Milkwood* Sidney Michaels presented, with Meg skirting about his hollow, distracted mind, to the solid focus, wit, and charm of the drunkard poet in Wales touched by a deity. While a more mature performance in the roles of every leading character would have been desirable, these are the reasons I believe the correct portrayal of Meg was the one described by the Star City Blog: a "guarded" one of "mystery" and "gravity". Finally, if Meg was to function as the answer to Dylan's persistent question, our hero would not have had to die.

Appendix A

Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Response by Scott Working

Saturday, October 9th

KCACTF Responder: Scott Working

Metropolitan Community College, Omaha, NE

Great Plains Theatre Festival

Upon entering the theatrical space, KCACTF Responder Scott Working commented on taking in the “evocative set” with lighting employing a “nice use of shadows”. At first he felt the space may have a loud air conditioning unit, but then noticed that it was the “sound of waves moving into an atmospheric overture” and was very pleased as the sound progressed further into the sound of rain.

Scott then moved on to talking about the elements of design during performance. Under the category of lights, Scott really liked the “dim, shadowy feel” but noted that the moments in which it was “too dark was really brief”. Scott really liked the fan gobo used in transitions, but wasn’t sure what was being projected on the center platform. His guess was that it was a sense of “moving on the ocean” and said he liked that, if that is what it was. Nevertheless, Scott said that the transitions conveyed a nice sense of “ocean travel and moving through time and space.” Scott mentioned that he couldn’t get past the

sensation that the cyclorama might have looked better if it had been pulled tight, but felt the shadows and texture were used effectively.

Scott commented that the costume design was “amazing” and “spot on” in terms of characters nicely setting the tone for the era. Scott felt the actors “wore them well rather than let the costumes wear [the actors].” He stated that it felt as though the actors “owned [the costumes]” letting the costumes affect their movement. I found it interesting that Scott did not mention the wigs that the actors wore.

Sound design was “handled masterfully” according to Scott, who especially enjoyed the moment of the first stage reading: the sounds of the crowd, having Dylan’s presence affect the audience, and the echo/delay effect on the microphone placing it in the new space. Scott loved the choice of having the microphone hang in the middle of the space, saying that it was “like a boxing ring” and found it appropriate because [the play] was like a fight with [Dylan’s] self and his wife.” Scott touched once more on the look of the lighting in this moment, stating that Dylan’s body looked great with very nice “shadows hitting him in profile.” Scott liked the atmospheric transition sounds of traffic and the use of surround sound effects in general.

Overall, Scott stated that the design work of the play had a “sense of movement in everything” with light, sound, and staging working together to “keep [the play] going forward,” especially transitions.

Scott then spoke on the play's scenic design, making note that there was one transition that felt long going into the third scene (hotel room). Scott thought the wall of bottle of booze was nice, feeling most complete once the bar scene arrived, making them more than a metaphor. He stated that the set was "evocative" and that the "revelation of space was really great" and offered some nice surprises. Scott felt that the middle platforming was "obviously shaped like a ship" and enjoyed the addition of the banisters in the second half. Scott was more critical about the pier leading out of the space, stating that it was "too specific looking" at times, specifically the split and frayed rope, to allow for the flexibility in staging locations that he held such as the museum.

Scott commented that the staging of the actors contained "good, solid, motivated moments." He referred to the Uta Hagen idea of destination and complimented the actors for seeming always to know where and why they were moving. Scott felt that there was a "good use of space" and that "really nice pictures" were formed. He specifically commented on the Act One "Bah Bah Black Sheep" scene between Dylan and Brinnin stating that he normally disliked "back acting" where both actors face front and one actor speaks at the other actor's back. However, Scott felt that both actors excelled at "sharing intimate moments without looking at each other," that it was a brave choice, and that they were "really nice and connected." Scott also mentioned the excellent staging of the "crowd scenes," such as the reporters and old folks, giving "individual moments to shine."

Pacing was “sharp and fast,” but Scott felt that he “missed a couple of lines as a combination of speed and dialect,” but only “two or three times tops during the course of the play.” Scott liked the “stichomythia” of the actors pacing the energy of the scene together as they were trading lines and keeping pace up. Respondent Scott Working summed up his compliment of the play’s sense of timing, stating that the first scene “flew by” and that the entire first act “really sailed.” Scott stated that he wasn’t sure he needed the final scene of the play after Dylan had drank all of the shots, but felt the problem was “more of a writer thing” and “you can’t rewrite the script.”

Scott Working felt the acting in the play “was really dynamic”. He brought up the actor’s successful work on the “three stool legs of good acting: relaxation, preparation, and concentration.” Scott really enjoyed the ensemble work, stating that “each had a character moment to shine” and that the “balance was really good” concerning the “mixing of styles.” He felt that the ensemble work made him feel like he was “watching a movie from the ‘50s” and complimented how each character had different physicalities.

The respondent then moved on to discussing each major character by name:

Scott felt that the actor playing Dylan did a “really good job with his accent” and had an excellent “concentration, commitment, and attention to detail.” Dylan did a great job of playing the “dangerous external” of being drunk and in riding the difficult line between a sense of actor “control and lack of control.” He then extended the “control” note to the rest of the cast as well.

In the role of Caitlyn, Scott Working felt that the actress had a nice dialect that was “specific and consistent” possessing a “natural sense from the beginning.” She had a good “energy and physicality” portraying a “real, true Irish girl” even when wearing the gown. Scott stated that perhaps her biggest strength, however, was her listening during Dylan’s long monologues.

For the role of Meg, Scott complimented the actress’ “energy” and “spunk” also stating her success in the difficult matter of not anticipating Dylan’s boob grab in the bar scene. Scott thought he might have wanted more foreshadowing to have been played in the role of Meg regarding the character’s eventual relationship with Dylan, but also stated that he liked the “surprise” and “strength of Meg entering the relationship on her own terms.”

For the role of Brinnin, the respondent had a great deal to say about the actor’s “great timing” and ability for “listening and control”. He felt that the actor had done well to paint mental pictures with his words, giving the audience a “specific image for everything you say.”

For the role of Angus, Scott again complimented the actor’s energy and found him to have portrayed the “epitome of the time” and was a “shiny diamond in his tuxedo.”

In the role of Mattock, Mr. Working declared that the actor had served as a “strong comic supporting back-up” and that he had a “good use of props” using his crutch towards comic relief.

Appendix B

Faculty Response by Professor Virginia Smith

Professor Virginia Smith

Response to the 2010 UNL production of *Dylan*

Analysis of *Dylan* directed by Aaron Sawyer

1. Was the physical adjustment into the Studio environment well done?

I think you did a good job of meeting the challenge we gave you, to theatricalize a realistic environment. I think you were least successful with the shop side of the space, for several reasons: 1- the lovely lighting effects on the scrim only worked for a portion of the audience. 2- there was a certain amount of audience abuse from some seats to see the action. 3- for this reviewer, the mixture of weathered wood and grand staircase was unattractive and hurt the cohesiveness of design. Going just a few clicks more neutral would have made it more pleasing. For example, a more neutral rope on the dock could have better represented the art museum later and delighted us with a revelation of space. The most successful side was the bar and the bedroom side. I think mostly because one was confined and the other spilled out. The design provided several opportunities for revelation of space and breaking of boundaries. You also created more of these with the blowing newspaper, the propeller, the wind and the rain. These theatricalized realistic elements told us we were in a space where anything could happen. I loved the moment when Gage went through the curtain to go on stage and appeared through the curtain a

second later taking us to a new space. The revelation of the bathtub was fun, but the placement in such an expansive space never really worked for me. Maybe just the isolation of the space with lights would have helped.

2. Was the stylistic adjustments to performance into the Studio environment well done?

Yes. For me, the main stylistic adjustment was in the staging. Your staging with the ensemble was very effective. I particularly liked the shifts of floor pattern, the circling in some scenes, then a sweep of bodies across the stage. There was an air of change in the energy and lightness of your work with them. They made the transitions between longer scenes work as forwards, rather than dips in our energy. Your staging of the two long, pivotal scenes was much less successful. There was a wandering quality to both the opening scene and the bathtub scene. The essence of the scenes is the urgency, first, using desire as manipulation in a tumultuous relationship, the second, using desire to overcome Meg's moral standards. The wandering belied this. In a realistic setting these scenes would have been very still with intense feeling. So, your interest in filling the space and keeping them moving obscured the underlying energies of the scenes.

3. Was the play well adjusted for its audience of college students?

I think a number of students really enjoyed this production, though everyone felt that it was too long. I think you handled the humor well. My preference that the whole

experience, from opening cue to end of curtain call, should be inside of 2 1/2 hours would have served this production very well.

4. Were appropriate and compelling theatrical images created?

Yes. I loved the use of sound to make realistic, poetic, and psychological commentary. This was most apparent in the transitions and in the lovely image of Dylan drinking the eighteen shots. I think your idea of using earth, air, water, and fire in the production worked very well. The rain, the liquid of the drinks, and the fans were most effective for me. Fire and earth were merely present, but still provided balance. The image of Dylan at the microphone at the top and bottom were certainly vivid. I think they served the play if the play is only about Dylan. If it's also about the two women that the playwright wrote in it might have been stronger not to have him present in the last scene with Caitlin. Perhaps only his voice lives on. However, making such a vivid choice is commendable and I know it worked for many people who saw the show.

5. Was the character of Dylan presented in a compelling manner?

Dylan was compelling. You did an excellent job of coaching Gage. I think he was most effective as a charmer, but I didn't really find his self-loathing very convincing. Doesn't he have to be intensely self-loathing to be so self-destructive? He seemed more like a spoiled child than a man who has to eat up every experience. His passion for life and

mission to fully express it in poetry were so huge, it must have been devastating to succeed so rarely. He also lacked in sexuality. There was almost no sexual contact between Dylan and any other character. One piece of blocking that characterized this was when Caitlin had to place her leg in position for him to reach it, instead Dylan grabbing her, and then he stroked it rather than reaching for her crotch. The text paints a more passionate picture. As I've already said, Gage grew enormously in this role, and though he was compelling, he was not multi-faceted and complex. The interaction with the child in the upstairs bedroom was the most compelling relationship in the play, apparently the relationship that Gage understood best.

6. Was the sense of poetry and artistic creation well established?

No. The handling of the poetry was never very effective for me, though it got much better as the rehearsal process continued. I couldn't understand Dylan's objective for reading the poems, and they were not well enough recited for me to be able to understand all the imagery. Gage's objective seemed to be "now I will recite my beautiful poems," but that is never the objective in the play.

7. Was the relationship between Dylan and Caitlin compelling?

I think you cast these roles well, and I think these actors grew tremendously in the process of playing them. But one of the failings of this production was not creating the

complex relationship between them that the text gives us. I think the playwright was more interested in the intense attraction and destructiveness of this love than he was in singing Dylan's praises. Indeed, Dylan is "going home to Caitlin" even when he kills himself.

In the same vein, I didn't find the relationship with Meg and Dylan at all convincing. Again, the playwright gives us an intense physical attraction that Meg could resist if Dylan wasn't so brilliant, funny, and charming. But even her adoration and his productivity while sober isn't enough food for the insatiable Dylan. Meg was played more like a tight-assed do-gooder who takes on Dylan as a project because her dad was a drunk. This limits the relationship and leaves us with little sympathy for her.

8. Was there a compelling climactic moment?

I loved everything about Dylan drinking the shots. All the theatrical elements worked together to give me a visceral and truly memorable experience.

9. Did the bookends of 'Do Not Go Gentle' serve the performance?

I think it worked; though it worked on an intellectual level rather than an emotional level. Having Dylan, smirking, there during Caitlin's grief wasn't every effective for me either.

10. Did the play feel appropriately contemporary and relevant despite being written over fifty years ago?

It did not become contemporary. I think it became somewhat relevant. Exploring the good muse/bad muse relationships might have made it more universal than treating it as a character study of one man. I heard over and over from students that they'd never heard of him and didn't really learn much about why he was important from the play. You might have done better at educating the audience with a lobby display or a note in the program.

A few more things:

Play selection: Ultimately, I think this was a good and productive challenge for you.

Script Analysis: At this point I don't remember your character analyses of each character. Were they in the first packet? This is the place where a more thorough analysis might have helped. The given circumstances about Meg are that she is as witty and brilliant as Dylan. She is his better angel, and Caitlin his demon. Also, in the final version of your play the women were not as fully developed as the men and the relationships with the women didn't seem to interest you. More careful script analysis would have aided you here. Why did the playwright give so much stage time to the relationship between Dylan and Caitlin? Why did he expand Meg's part in Dylan's life? He was clearly more interested in the relationships than you were. You seemed to be most interested in the

man's genius and alcoholism. The production would have been better if you and the playwright had taken the same journey.

Your concept was pretty clear in the production, and with the exceptions that have already been noted, it worked.

I think your casting was very good with the exception of Emily. Again, I think a stronger character analysis would have aided you here. Just going through that speech about her verbal prowess might have suggested using someone who loves verbal attack and has never met her verbal match.

I think your staging worked quite well. Again, most effective with the ensemble and least effective in the two long relationship scenes.

Your collaboration with your designers was a struggle, I know from being behind the scenes. But ultimately: the costumes were lovely, though the hair wasn't well done, and didn't aid the actresses in their characterizations. The sound design was terrific, and very supportive of your intent. The set wasn't either very evocative or very playable, but parts of it worked very well. The props were functional, but not always very believable. (i.e. the twist top on the beer, the ridiculous movie camera and light set up.) The lights were excellent and some of the lighting effects were quite evocative. My only problem with the lights were in the two relationship scenes I've mentioned before. In the first scene, it

didn't seem like night. And in the scene with Meg, the bathroom was too palatial to be believed. The projections were minimal, but effective.

Appendix C

Faculty Response by Dr. Ian Borden

Dr. Ian Borden,

Response to the 2010 UNL production of *Dylan*

Was the physical adjustment into the Studio environment well done?

I think the adjustment to alley seating both solved and created problems. While it allowed for multiple locations, the usual tennis-match effect of watching an alley production popped up, and the curtained-off locales created a couple of timing and sightline issues:

1. audience members seated near that end of the auditorium could not see inside the bar or hotel room very well.
2. the noise and time it took to open the curtain was distracting

Trying to see down the length of the set made many people have difficulty in seeing the show.

However, the proximity to the actors was beneficial, the ability to switch quickly from one location to another worked well when it happened, and the surprise of the bathtub was superb. The drop down microphone and performance stage was perhaps the most effective element.

Were the stylistic adjustments to performance into the Studio environment well done?

In the sense that most performances were at the right vocal and physical level for the space, yes. However, the alley configuration, as noted above, created problems.

The sound design overpowered what the actors were producing on stage.

Scene changes were much longer than I am comfortable with.

Was the play well-adjusted for its audience of college students?

Mostly, yes. Pacing was slow at times, in part because of script issues. College students should have had no great difficulty relating to issues in the play.

Were appropriate and compelling theatrical images created?

The fights and violence were great. Joking aside, it's the first time here that I felt actors from UNL fully embodied the work I was trying to create as a fight director.

The image of Dylan at the microphone was really nice, as was the last drinking binge.

The rain at the top of the show was great, but never paid off in the show.

I liked the bathtub.

Was the character of Dylan presented in a compelling manner?

Yes. Best performance I've seen Gage Wallace give: it captured the essence of a man who could at once be a horrible, violent drunk and the charismatic, engaging life of the party that people wanted to be around.

Several other good performances: Jessie Tidball, Sam Hartley, Liza Thalken.

Others were not very impressive.

Was the sense of poetry and artistic creation well established?

This question doesn't really make sense to me in terms of the show I saw, so I would have to say no.

Was the relationship between Dylan and Caitlin compelling?

Yes. Wallace and Tidball played off each other very well. A sense of real connection between them that was heightened, not distanced, by the violence.

Good job as a director bringing this out and forward.

Was there a compelling climactic moment?

Yes: the play ended with the drinking of the 18 shots. And then it dragged on for a long time after. So the emotional peak of the play was undercut by the denouement. This is in large part a script issue.

Did the bookends of 'Do Not Go Gentle' serve the performance?

It didn't work for me, but I know others were taken by it. The opening reading helped newcomers to Dylan realize who he was and locate him. However, as noted immediately above, the extension of the play after the emotional climax hurt its emotional impact. I would have preferred a voice over while Wallace drank the shots than to have him repeat the poem on stage afterwards. It also weakened Caitlin's final scene. Nor did Wallace's reading capture the "rage" repeated through the poem, or have the astonishing life energy embodied by Dylan the man.

Did the play feel appropriately contemporary and relevant despite being written over fifty years ago?

As I had not realized it was that old, yes, this felt fresh. It did not feel at all like a play written for a bourgeois audience sitting in nice velvet seats in a proscenium configuration.

Overall, I felt this was a good production with some very good performances weakened by a script that should have been edited severely. However, a director is often not able to overcome this difficulty because of contract restrictions. It certainly is the most successful piece I have seen you do on stage here. Congratulations.

Appendix D

Faculty Response by Dr. William Grange

Thursday, April 21, 2011

Dr. William Grange

Aaron,

Below are my responses to the questions you posed:

I thought the Studio space worked well for this production. The discovery space behind the curtain which housed the bedroom, the bar, and burlesque theater, etc. was clumsy at times, especially when the audience sat in the dark. There is nothing worse than actors on stage, waiting for their cues--as the audience waits for the scene to get set up.

The stylistic conceits were interesting, such as the use of the stairs as a multi-function unit. The water dripping down upstage on the stair unit did not work stylistically, perhaps because it was too obvious an attempt at symbolism of some kind. The lighting worked well in most instances--the most obvious example is the eighteen shot glass fountain the play's conclusion. The entrances during the party scene were clumsy, though the good tempo in the second act helped move things along.

The play, though extremely old-fashioned, worked very well for college student audiences, perhaps because it was so accessible. The sense of student actors performing

was always present; the production emphasized theatrical possibilities in leaping over time and space, using complications and tempo to hold the audience's attention. Such techniques student audiences are unused to seeing.

The character of Dylan became more compelling as the play proceeded. The second act was much better than the first, largely because it is better written and the tempo increased by at least 40% over the first act. The conflicts between Dylan and Caitlin are more direct and personal in the second act. And the performance of Gage Wallace was so much more focused in the second act. The relationship between Caitlin and Dylan in general was not compelling because the characters were at times supposed to be in competition with each other, which I think may have been a goal of this production. The conflict within the play, however, reveals that Caitlin is there merely to allow Dylan to arise from the restraints of obscurity; Caitlin is simply along for the ride. Her so-called "aspirations" as a dancer, or a writer, or something less discernible served mostly to show Dylan for what he was and what he wanted to be: a darling of the American public, a momentary celebrity. Caitlin as a character is a kind of albatross he has to throw off to realize the full extent of his narcissism.

There was no compelling climactic moment, in the sense of anagnorisis—unless one views the paroxysm of drinking at the end as that instant of pure self-realization. But that moment has no tragic ramification, no revelatory catharsis. Dylan has long ago realized who he is and what he wants.

The “Do not go gentle into that good night” served to book-end the performance in a satisfying, though entirely old-fashioned way. But the play itself is very old-fashioned structurally. What made the production satisfying were the performances, especially by Gage Wallace, Sam Hartley, and Emily Martinez.

The play did not feel contemporary, but that is not a fault of this production. It felt old-fashioned, outdated, and at times almost plodding—because that is what it is. And yet the play was completely effective in the second act. I think a vastly improved tempo in the second act helped it enormously. The logical conclusion is, why did the first act plod?

The first act needed severe cuts; the burlesque theater scene was superfluous, for example, and should have been excised completely. Other scenes did not need wholesale exclusion, but the first act would have benefited enormously from cuts that would have amounted to at least a half hour.

Appendix E

Publication Review by the Star City Blog

REVIEW: University of Nebraska-Lincoln's "Dylan"

By Robert Stewart

10/8/10

In the 1953 film "The Wild One," a leather-clad motorcycle enthusiast played by Marlon Brando is asked, "What are you rebelling against?"

"What have you got?" is his reply.

When Gage Wallace takes the stage at the beginning of "Dylan" (playing the title role), in a leather jacket and fisherman's sweater, he could be a nautical brother to Brando's rebellious youth. What is he raging against? The dying of the light.

"Dylan," directed by University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate student Aaron Sawyer, follows poet Dylan Thomas on his tours of the United States in the early 1950s as a literary celebrity: giving readings and reaping the carnal benefits of his renown, drunk on the attention and also drunk on copious amounts of alcohol.

Wallace gives Dylan a real charm throughout: an early scene between him and Jessie Tidball as Dylan's wife, Caitlin, gives a great sense of Dylan as an artist tragically infatuated with his muse to the detriment of all else - including his own well-being. A scene near the end of the first act between Dylan and his American manager Brinnin (Sam Hartley) in which Dylan adopts "Baa-Baa Black Sheep" as his personal anthem is also a standout.

As the woman who never tried to change the man but just let him be himself and suffer for it, Tidball imbues Caitlin with a real sense of the loss and sacrifice she had to endure

as the wife of the "prince of the apple towns." In an early scene in which she wears a ratty fur coat to a cold beach and later at a party Caitlin and Dylan are treating as a fundraiser, Tidball gives Caitlin a real complexity, riddled with emotion.

Both Wallace and Tidball have the added actorly task of giving their characters the native lilt of their countries of origin, Wales and Ireland, respectively. The rendering of the accents was strong throughout, but there were some moments in the rush of first performance when the brogues overwhelmed the dialogue, making it difficult to understand.

The moment when exasperation gives way to acceptance of the situation is ably captured by Hartley as Brinnin, and in his many scenes with Dylan, he has ample opportunity to demonstrate this. Emily Martinez as "Meg" gives a somewhat guarded performance, which helps to point to her character's ulterior motives and adds a sense of mystery and gravity to her portrayal.

Director Sawyer uses almost every inch of the Studio Theatre in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Temple Building, creating a space that stands in for Wales, America and several locations in both countries. Sawyer excels in creating lively stage pictures when actors are playing off of each other, but stark moments of monologues occasionally felt flat.

He drew very complete performances from every actor, including several (Gary Henderson, Catherine Dvorak, Patrick Zatloukal, Stephanie Bourgeois and Jake Denney) who played multiple roles. Perhaps Sawyer's greatest strength as a director was his handling of all the technical elements involved in the production, throughout the many

shifts in the play: shifts of geography, shifts of scenes, shifts of mood through lighting or sound or gesture. Everything moved fluidly and served the play as a whole. Production was one of the strongest elements of the show overall. The attention to detail and commitment to grand gestures, when needed, carried over into everything - from the costumes by Janice Stauffer to the lighting by Matthew Baye to projections by Max Holme to sound by Jeff O'Brien and the sets by Jacob Boyett. The set design especially stands out: a small pier/wharf has been erected on one end of the theatre, and the other features a multi-purpose set defined by a wall of bottles. When water falls from overhead onto the pier and the bottles shine in yellow light, liquid bookends are created, with the sounds of water and the cries of screaming gulls, the loneliness of living washed in whiskey bubbles to the surface, and the play has real power.

Appendix F

Publication Review by the Lincoln Journal Star

Review: Strong cast helps make 'Dylan' must-see theater

By Olive Bucklin

Posted: Thursday, October 7, 2010 11:59 pm

"Poets aren't expected to be model citizens," wrote Dylan Thomas' biographer Paul Farris. And in "Dylan," the play by Sidney Michaels, we get a close up look at a man coming apart at the seams. The play delights in the poet's wicked glory while traipsing along with him to the bars and bedrooms of his last American tours.

On tour, and in the play, we see Dylan (brilliantly portrayed by Gage Wallace) reading his own work.

By the time Dylan Thomas arrived in the United States, he had gained fame in literary circles, but he also suffered from depression, a mortal addiction to alcohol and was terrified of losing his inspiration as a writer. The play portrays Dylan's heartrending dance of death, his life coming to an end.

Graduate student Aaron Sawyer, a seasoned director with experience in theater and film, directed the play. The undergraduate cast is led by Wallace; Jessie Tidball as Dylan's wife, Caitlin; Emily Martinez as friend Meg; and Sam Hartley as Brinnin (writer and tour promoter). The rest of the cast is strong and robust.

A scene in which writers speak to writers comes in a rare moment of sobriety when Dylan explicates the socialist/humanist reading of a nursery rhyme.

There were no missteps in the play: The direction was inspired, transitions were smooth and clear, and the pace was crisp.

I waited nervously for a decent Welsh accent and was quite relieved - thrilled, to be honest - that the voices rang fairly true. The American tour came to an end with Dylan's death in New York's Chelsea Hotel after having belted down 18 straight whiskeys at the White Horse Tavern. The wastrel who wrote poetry of transcendent beauty was gone from the indifferent world at which he raged. He was 39.

Appendix G: *Dylan* Step Outline and Character Breakdown

Dylan	by Sidney Michaels		Step Outline	MFA Thesis Prep	Aaron Sawyer	University of Nebraska, Lincoln	Pg 1						
			Central Dramatic Action= Dylan Thomas kills himself	Chromatic Moment = Dylan killing himself by drinking alcohol.	Free= Dylan's inner light Water/Liquid= Wind= travel, movement, distance Earth= connection to the past/ groundedness			Instructions from SM booth perspective. SR= scene shot. SL= main entrance					
			Central Dramatic Question= Will Dylan Thomas escape at peace with his creative light? Answer: Yes, in death.1	Concept= Dylan Thomas is a Dionysus god celebrating earth, wind, water, fire									
Scene Number	Event #	Pg #	Stage Locale	Action	Dramatic Question	Key words	Projections- environment/ character	Location	Costumes	Props	Sound	Lighting	Set
1.1	1			Dylan is asked to come to America									
1.1	2			Cat and Dylan fight			Thought? Character in b/w and environmental in color	Boathouse in Wales, estuary			thought- magic microphone in the middle of the stage that raises and lowers		
	3			Dylan goes to the pub and complains about Cat not having sex with him				Brown Hotel- Ivy William's Pub					
1.1	3.1	11	all	PRESHOW		Night stars		Wales	Dylan in 1, 1 costume but not wearing coat	none	rain	practicals in wales house, moon	rain SR
1.1	3.5	11	C [curtain open]	Dylan alone on stage, reads poetry and lights a cigarette	Why is this man destroying himself?		C- ECU B&W of Dylan's eyes SL, ears SR	Boathouse in Wales, estuary	Dylan in tweed with coat,	cigarette, zippo, alcohol bottles			
1.1	4	11	SR	Cat finds Dylan lying on the ground outside the boathouse looking at the stars	Is the warmth of Catlyn's love enough to calm Dylan?	Edith Sitwell	SR& SL: E- Transformation from night stars to full color animated morning sun from SL through Wales green bay	Boathouse in Wales, estuary	Cat-Fake fur coat, bikini		Sound of the ocean	Stars and moonlight	Cocked fish net, rock, stars, boat house
1.1	5			Dylan claims to have wanted to be a drunk when he grows up		Augustus John							
1.1	6	15		Cat reminisces about the life she had before marrying Dylan									
1.1	7	16		Dylan tells Cat he feels like he's lost his edge- hasn't made anything good for 15 years		Wunderkind							
1.1	8			Cat asks Dylan not to go to America									
1.1	9	17		Dylan claims America will bring money		America is our salvation estuary							
1.1	10			Cat buys the argument and asks Dylan to read her the poem he wrote when they were married.						2 cigarettes, lit.			
1.1	11	18		Dylan steps her. She hits him back									
1.1	12	19		Dylan recites his poem								Morning light	
1.1	13			Catlyn is moved and asks to be held									
1.1	14	20		Dylan professes his love for only her, walks her back, and departs.		toothless lion my personality is tattooed, it won't come off					airplane roar		

Dylan	by Sidney Michaels	Step Outline	MFA Thesis Prep	Aaron Sawyer	University of Nebraska, Lincoln	Pg 2							
		Central Dramatic Action= Dylan Thomas kills himself	Climactic Moment = Dylan killing himself by drinking alcohol.	Fire= Dylan's inner light Water/Liquid= cleansing Wind= travel, movement, distance Earth= connection to the past/ groundedness	Instructions from SM booth perspective : SR= scene stop, SL= main entrance								
		Central Dramatic Question= Will Dylan Thomas become at peace with his creative light? Answer: Yes, in death.2	Concept= Dylan Thomas is a Dionysius god celebrating earth, wind, water, fire										
Scene Number	Event #	Pg #	Stage Locale	Action	Dramatic Question	Key words	Projections/ environment/ character	Location	Costumes	Props	Sound	Lighting	Set
1.2	14.5		SR	travel from Wales to America			E- Transition projection of SR&SL with blue ocean middle			huge fan			
1.2	15	21	C	Dylan meets with Reporters	Will the adoration of the American Press provide the confidence he needs?	arterial, living in a dream, hidden sky with appearing buildings within desaturated NYC 1950's building skyline		Idlewild Airport, NYC		pods and pencils			teaser scene steel-rodded ramp
1.2	16			Brimm enters and takes him away		wet machetoshes				cigars			
1.3	17	22	SL	3 Days Later, Angus and Brimm have fight over controlling Dylan	Can Angus and Brimm provide a steady hand of restraint?	RCA Building, Peier Lorne, Myra Cotts, Sol Hurck		SL= C- ECU B&W of Dylan's eyes closed sleeping interlaid with distant and full desaturated color spots of Caitlyn in Wales	Manhattan Hotel Room		coffee and Danish, butter, knife, tray		round of covers, bed
1.3	18		SL	Brimm talks about his desire to help Dylan		piddle, forest fire, tiger, child of thirty-eight, Good Joe of Genuses		hotel room wall window? / abstract painting?					
1.4	19	25	C [curtain drawn]	Dylan speaks to a Clubwoman	Can middle class academic pomp and circumstance flatter him into self-assuredness?			Greater New York Chapter of the American National Poetry Appreciation Center					teaser scene
1.5	20	26	SL	Angus attempts to find Dylan with Meg and Annabelle	Can fawning young women satisfy his inferiority complex?		E- artistically lit bar bottle display	White Horse Tavern				smoked over aura	rustic table, hanging iron chandeliers, statue of a white horse
1.5	21	27	SL	Annabelle decides to become Dylan's mistress		Good Housekeeping				pink lady, dry vodka martini, scotch on the rocks			
1.5	22	28	SL	Dylan meets Meg and Annabelle		milked wine, Weitschmerz				cutlery			

Appendix G: *Dylan* Step Outline and Character Breakdown

Dylan by Sidney Michaels. Directed by Aaron Sawyer. Page 3

Dylan	by Sidney Michaels	Step Outline			MFA Thesis Prep	Aaron Sawyer	University of Nebraska, Lincoln	Pg 3					
		Central Dramatic Action= Dylan Thomas kills himself	Climactic Moment = Dylan killing himself by drinking alcohol.	Fire= Dylan's inner light Water/liquid= cleansing Wind= travel, movement, distance Earth= connection to the past/ groundedness	Instructions from SM booth perspective : SR= scene setup, SL= main entrance								
			Central Dramatic Question= Will Dylan Thomas become at peace with his creative light? Answer: Yes, in death.	Concept= Dylan Thomas is a Dionysus god celebrating earth, wind, water, fire									
Scene Number	Event #	Pg #	Stage Locale	Action	Dramatic Question	Key words	Projections- environment/ character	Location	Costumes	Props	Sound	Lighting	Set
1.5	23	30	SL [curtain open]	Dylan confronts Meg and pinches her breasts		villanelle, inquisious, unique, eunuch alexander's regime band							
1.5	24	32	SL [curtain open]	Dylan feels guilty about Caitlin and slips into self pity before being escorted to the bathroom		gauche, Wordsworth							
1.5	25	32	SL [curtain open]	Brennin enters to take Dylan away		Pope Eliot				water glass			
1.5	26	33	SL [curtain open]	Dylan chokes in the bathroom									
1.6	27	34	C [curtain drawn]	Brennin stalls with the stage manager	Will Dylan's own poetry revive the light inside of him?			22nd St YMHA Kaufman Concert Hall		beer, handkerchie f			feeling of ropes and curtains
1.7	28	35		Mattock and Annabelle drag in Dylan									
1.7	29	36	SR [curtain drawn]	Dylan takes the stage and reads In My Craft or Sullen Art	Will being the star of the party cure him?		C-Caitlyn in Wales				applause		
1.8	30	37	C, SL [curtain open]	Celebration after the poetry reading	Will America destroy Dylan's connection to Caitlyn?	oh you take the high road and I'll take the low road and I'll be in scotland afore you, Marx Bros, Salvador Dali		Park Avenue Apt		drinks, glasses	singing off stage	projection of Kaleidoscope of colorful shapes like a rainbow in motion	
1.9	31	39	SL & SR [curtain open]	Phone call between Dylan and Caitlyn	Will Dylan find sanity by reconnecting to his own childhood?		E- ocean center- NYC SL, Wales SR	Boathouse in Wales, estuary					fish net
1.10	32	41	C [curtain drawn]	Dylan beside a crib with Brennin recites bath bath black sheep		Old Howard	Center green grass in house in Harvard Square	Child's bedroom			party sounds off stage	darkened	boy's crib
1.11	33	44	SL [curtain drawn]	Dylan attacks Ms. Wondeland	Is Dylan too far gone to be saved?	Raccliff	E- club lights Center	Burlesque	strip burlesque,	blue envelope	loudspeaker, off stage altercation, burlesque drum	pink spotlight	gold tasseled split velvet curtain

[illegible]

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[illegible]

Dylan	Current as of: Wednesday, August 27th 2010																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12							
Scene Number	Dylan	Caitlyn	Meg	Brinnin	Angus	Matlock	Anabelle	Elena Henry Reporter	Cladwaine Porter, Girl	Katherine Wood Reporter	Miss Henry Reporter	Jay Drunk Reporter	Minister Reporter	Doctor Reporter	Walter Reporter	Stage Hand	Bartender	Stage Manager	Deck Officer
1.12	x				x		x					x							
1.12	x			x	x								x						
1.12	x					x							x						
1.13																			
1.13	x	x																	
2.1	x	x		x	x		x												
2.1.5																			
2.2	x			x															
2.2	x																		
2.3		x																	
2.3			x			x													
2.4	x	x																	
2.5				x				x			x								
2.5	x	x	x		x			x		x		x							

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[illegible]

Appendix H: Dylan Rehearsal Schedule

Dylan Rehearsal Schedule, Studio Theatre, 7-11pm

Dylan Rehearsal Schedule											
Studio Theater	Date	Scenes	Action	7-11pm							
Weekday				Cast Members Called	1. Dylan	2. Caitlyn	3. Meg	4. Brinnin	5. Angus	6. Mattock	7. Annabelle
Monday	Aug 30, 2010	1.1, 1.9	Play discussion and Block	Entire Cast	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm
Tuesday	Aug 31, 2010	1.2, 1.4, 1.5	Block	1, 3-11	7pm	not called	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm
Wednesday	Sep 1, 2010	1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5	Review Off Book	Entire Cast	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm
Thursday	Sep 2, 2010	1.3, 1.6, 1.8, 1.7	Block	Entire Cast	7pm	not called	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	not called
Friday	Sep 3, 2010	1.10-1.13	Block	1-7, 9-11	7pm	8pm	8pm	7pm	8pm	7pm	not called
Saturday	Sep 4, 2010		OFF								
Sunday	Sep 5, 2010		OFF								
Monday	Sep 6, 2010	1.3, 1.6-1.13	Review Off Book	1-7, 9-12	7pm	8pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	not called
Tuesday	Sep 7, 2010	2.2, 2.3, 2.4,	Block	1-4	7pm	7pm	7pm	not called	not called	not called	not called
Wednesday	Sep 8, 2010	2.1, 2.5	Block	1-5, 8-10	7pm	7pm	7pm	8pm	not called	not called	not called
Thursday	Sep 9, 2010	2.1-2.5	Review Off Book	1-5, 8-10	7pm	7pm	7pm	8pm	not called	not called	not called
Friday	Sep 10, 2010	2.8-2.11	Block	1-5, 10-12	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	not called	not called	not called
Saturday	Sep 11, 2010		OFF								
Sunday	Sep 12, 2010	2.6, 2.7, 2.12	Block	1-4, 10, 12	7pm	not called	7pm	7pm	not called	not called	not called
Monday	Sep 13, 2010	2.6-2.12	Review Off Book	1-5, 10-12	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	not called	not called	not called
Tuesday	Sep 14, 2010	All	Table Read	Entire Cast	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm
Wednesday	Sep 15, 2010	2.5, 1.5, 1.6, 2.3, 2.8, 2.12	Review Off Book	2-6	7pm	7pm	730pm	7pm	730pm	730pm	not called
Thursday	Sep 16, 2010	Act One	Review Off Book	Entire Cast	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm
Friday	Sep 17, 2010	2.1-2.5	Review Off Book	1-5, 8-10	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	not called
Saturday	Sep 18, 2010		OFF								
Sunday	Sep 19, 2010	2.6-2.12	Review Off Book	1-5, 10-12	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	not called
Monday	Sep 20, 2010	Act One	Act I Run	Entire Cast	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm
Tuesday	Sep 21, 2010	Act Two	Act II Run	Entire Cast	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm	7pm

8. Elena	9. Kathryn	10. Jay	11. Walter	12. Bartender,
Henry, Reporter, Clubwoman and, Reporter	Henry, Drunk, Reporter, Minister, Doctor	Henry, Reporter, Minister, Doctor	Henry, Reporter, Minister, Doctor	Henry, Reporter, Minister, Doctor

Appendix I: Dylan Preliminary Sound Plot

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Cue List Dylan (UNL 2010)

Cue	Act	Scene	Page	Description	Note:
1	1	1	11	Preshow: News broadcast of a New York news and music station	Wales and NYC sounds between non-transition scenes relating to Dylan's inner connection to 'home'
2	1	1	11	Preshow: ANNC incorporated into news broadcast'	
3	1	1	11	FADE	
4	1	1	11	Sounds of the OCEAN	
4.5	1	1	11	Center microphone, Dylan recites 'Do Not Go Gentle Into Mic	modern mic from the space'
5	1	1	18	SEAGULL flying overhead	
6	1	1	20	AIRPLANE roars that carries him there	
Scene	1	2	20	Idlewild AIRPORT, just outside customs, on a steel ribbed ramp leading to the main terminal	
Scene	1	3	22	MORNING in a Manhattan hotel room	
Mic	1	4	25	CLUB WOMAN MICROPHONE	period looking mic and sound with stand?
Scene	1	5	26	White Horse Tavern	
Scene	1	6	34	Y.M.H.A. Kaughman Concert Hall (on/off) Stage	
8	1	6	36	APPLAUSE over the loudspeaker	
Mic	1	6	36	Dylan at Podium (with or w/o Mic?)	period looking mic and sound with stand?
9	1	6	37	Great Applause	live?
Scene	1	6	37	Park Ave Apartment	
10	1	6	37	Kleidoscope (representing the effect of a crowded cocktail party)	
SONG	1	6	37	OFFSTAGE SINGING (you take the high road)	will also be live, but support with party sounds
SONG	1	6	39	SING (New York a Hell of a town)	
11	1	8	39	TRANSATLANTIC CALL (possible noise, static, lo-fi style mic?)	
Scene	1	9	41	Childs Bedroom in Harvard Square	
12	1	9	41	PARTY sounds offstage (recorded?)	recorded
13	1	9	44	TRANSITION: VOICE OVER LOUDSPEAKER	
14	1	10	44	Burlesque DRUM	live
15	1	10	45	VOICE OVER: LOUDSPEAKER	live
16	1	10	45	SOUR TRUMPET (Comes in and turns into) Double-Bass Notes of OCEAN LINER Environment	recorded
17	1	11	49	BOAT WHISTLE	
18	1	12	49	BOAT HORN (Booms) FADES, into the OCEAN SOUNDS OF WHALES	
19	1	12	51	Sounds of the OCEAN ROLLING in on the beach (stars glinting in the night) The Scene Dissolves to Darkness	

Appendix I: Dylan Preliminary Sound Plot

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Cue List Dylan (UNL 2010)

20	1	12	51	INTERMISSION	ocean into New York music after time
21	2	1	52	Beginning of ACT III Telephone Sequence?	maybe ocean instead?
X	x	x	x	BOAT HORN (Booms) FADES, into the OCEAN SOUNDS OF WHALES	transition again from Wales to NYC
22	2	1	53	THUNDER in the Dark	
23	2	2	54	PHONE RINGS (Practical?)	yes, off
			58	BOAT HORN (Booms) FADES, into the OCEAN SOUNDS OF WHALES	Cat returns to Wales here, enacted on stage though not in script.
Scene	2	3	59	Metropolitan Museum of Art	
Scene	2	4	61	Darkened hotel room in TEXAS	
Scene	2	5	65	ANTONES home in Washington D.C.	
24	2	5	65	PARTY SOUNDS AND MUSIC	
Scene	2	6	76	Doctors Office, Center Mic	ocean?
Scene	2	7	78	Y.M.H.A. Kaughman Concert Hall (Basement)	
25	2	7	79	THUNDER from the Ceiling (stomping crowd)	yes, let's take this metaphor all the way to an ocean storm by the end, mixing in thunder from the beginning
26	2	8	81	Cresting surf of the Applause of thousands of people transforming into the OCEAN in Whales	
27	2	8	82	Cat descends the stairs to the Boat house OCEAN SOUNDS	
28	2	8	85	OCEAN SOUNDS are Crested	
29	2	8-A	86	MUTED BELL RINGS WITH insistence	
Scene	2	9-A	86	St. Vincents Hospital	
30	2	9-A	87	SIRENS OFFSTAGE	
31	2	9-A	87	Sirens Wind Down to Halt	
32	2	9-A	89	OCEAN SOUNDS	
33	2	9-A	90	OCEAN SOUNDS AS IT HITS THE EARTH	
34	2	9-B	90	BOAT HORN AND SHIPS BELLS ARE HEARD	
35	2	9-B	91	SOUNDS OF SEA AND SKY	



Dylan Thomas (Gage Wallace) speaking with the Clubwoman (center, Catherine Dvorak; Act I, pg. 25) Photo by Doug Smith.



Dylan (Gage Wallace) performing “In My Craft of Sullen Art” at the Y.M.H.A.

Kaufmann Concert Hall (Act I, pg. 36) Photo by Doug Smith.



Dylan (Gage Wallace) and Caitlin (Jessie Tidball) at the home of the Antones (Act II, pg. 76) Photo by Doug Smith.



**Dylan Thomas (Gage Wallace) just before ending his life. (Act II, pg. 86) Photo by
Doug Smith.**



Officer (Gary Henderson), Caitlin, (Jessie Tidball) and Dylan (Gage Wallace) after Dylan's death. (Act II, pg. 90, Broadway ending) Photo by Doug Smith.

Appendix K

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